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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["ALVERLEY HAS NOT BEEN IN THE HOUSE A WEEK," SAID MARSTON, "SO I MUST SAY YOU HAVE LOST NO TIME."]

THE LOST STAR.

CHAPTER VII.

The next morning, with a very long face, Mrs. Nicholson came to inform Ruby of the sad accident which had befallen the young Viscount.

She was obliged to listen with an air of surprise, hating herself all the while for the necessary duplicity. After a few expressions of condolence and sympathy, she inquired if he were a favourite with his own family.

"Not so much as Mr. Harold"—with evident reluctance; "but then, you see, his lordship the Earl was always what you may call an 'old maid of a man'—not that I mean any want of respect; and Alverley was a bit wild in London—there's no denying it. Just you keep out of his way, Miss, for he's likely to take a fancy to you as soon as ever he catches sight of your face. Nothing stops him."

"I think I could," with quiet dignity.

"Now, that's just because you don't know him. Excuse me for saying so; but there's half-a-dozen of them I can call to mind who

said just the same thing, and he managed to twist them all round his finger when he chose to make himself pleasant. I always know he has good heart at the bottom of it all; but it is aggravating for my lady, and I've known her cry over it scores of times. Mr. Harold gets into a scrape every now and then, but never so bad as the other, and I've heard his pa say again and again, 'If Harold were my eldest son, what a blessing it would be, to be sure!'

"Perhaps he will sow his wild oats," said Ruby, comfortingly, as she thought of the poor white face which had rested on her shoulder only the night before.

"Bless you, miss!" and Mrs. Nicholson's broad bosom heaved with a prodigious sigh, "if he lived to the age of ninety he would scarcely have time to get rid of such a big crop as that; and it's my belief he will go on just the sum till he dies. For two years he was regular banished from his home—things came to such a pass as that!"

"Then he ought to be ashamed of himself!" her cheeks glowing as she remembered how he had entrapped her into a kiss.

"I don't like to be too hard on him, poor young gentleman! He knows no better; at least he has forgotten how to do differently, and harshness, in my humble opinion, will only drive him to worse. But I'm interrupting you and the young ladies in their studies. There's a Charlotte Russe for your dinner to day, because I heard you were fond of apples."

With a kindly nod, the house keeper bustled out of the room, smiling at Ruby's thanks; and the latter hastened into the school-room, where the two children were waiting for her with impatience.

"Miss Selliers," they both began at once, "Alverley's ill, and he wants to see us. Do let us go!"

"Who says so?"

"Philipps, his man, you know, brought the message when you were talking to old Mrs. Nick;" and Beatrice flung her book up into the air, as a sign that she meant to be off at once.

"Pick up that book, and say Mrs. Nicholson next time," said Ruby, reprovingly. "When you have finished your English history you



may go to your brother for a quarter of an hour, as you won't be able to take a walk today. Don't stay longer or you will tire him."

"Perhaps he will want to see you too;" and Marian locked up with a mischievous smile. "I'll tell him that you know the loveliest stories in the world."

"I beg that you will not talk of me at all. Go on with your reading. Child, you never were so troublesome before."

After this severe remark, the lessons went on steadily for awhile, till Ruby herself put a stop to them, and sent the two children to be made tidy before they went to their brother. She could not help wondering if he had guessed that she was their governess, and if this were the secret of his suddenly wishing to see his little sisters, after having been in the house for several days before without asking for them.

Longing for a breath of fresh air, she threw open the window, and leant out. Her heart was full of wild wishes that seemed never destined to be realized—wishes for Violet's happiness and welfare, that poor silly child, who was always sure to do the wrong thing, even if, as happened every now and then, but not too often—she meant to do the right!

The rain-drops were falling in a ceaseless patter on the iron staircase just below the window. Looking down on it, and remembering how Lord Alverley had struggled up it for her sake, in spite of his pain and weakness; how he had come to fetch her from the wood, when such an accident as had befallen him would have been sufficient to make most men forget a promise, especially if that promise were given to a stranger in which they could have not a particle of interest, she sighed deeply. It seemed to her so impossibly sad that, with so much that was good in his disposition, his ways should be the ways of wickedness, and all his kindlier qualities perverted to evil. The sigh was echoed by some one standing close behind her.

Turning round with a start, she exclaimed, indignantly, as the colour flew into her cheeks: "Captain Marston, what right have you to here?"

"The right of a friend to warn his friend that she is found out," he answered with the utmost coolness, as he lounged against the window-curtain.

"What do you mean?" fear and curiosity getting the better of her anger.

"Alverley has not been in the house a week, so I must say you've lost no time!"

Her eyes flashed, and she looked at him with supreme disdain, but said nothing.

He was intensely puzzled; in any other girl he would have thought her silence the result of shame; but he knew Ruby St. Heliers too well not to be certain that whatever she did, however rash and imprudent it might be in the eyes of others, she thought to be right; and would know how to defend when called in question.

"Do you remember where you dropped this?" slowly drawing from his pocket the small pocket-handkerchief, which he had picked up the night before.

"No, I never missed it," still standing on the defensive, with eyes fixed on the dripping trees outside.

"Shall I tell you?"

"No, tell me nothing; only leave the room which you had no right to enter."

"Ruby, you are very foolish to wish to make me your enemy," and he leant forward so as to obtain a better view of her supremely indifferent expression.

"I don't make you so," and she looked round, her colour rising swiftly to her cheeks. "You have become so through the irresistible force of circumstances, as the only person who can do harm to the one being in all the world that there is for me to love."

"You persist in this foolish prejudice," he said, impatiently, "when you know that I love her better than my own soul."

"A thing for which you never cared."

"How can you tell?" gloomily. "I was different once."

"I wish we had known you then."

"Perhaps," with a sneer, "you think I should have fallen in love with the virtuous Ruby instead."

"Heaven forbid!" with a shudder. "It is bad enough now to have to talk to you, when you hate me as cordially as I hate you."

"Don't be too sure," with a smile. "If I had never known your sister, I should have thought you the most charming little piece of perversity that ever fascinated the heart of man. Even now, I come to offer you peace instead of war. Only tell me where Violet is, and I will say nothing about your escapade last night." Watching her intently he saw her face change, and her lip curled scornfully as she threw back her head.

"You know nothing, therefore your silence is more compulsory than praiseworthy."

"Do you fancy Lady Chester will think it nothing, when I tell her that I picked up your handkerchief by Alverley's side, at past twelve o'clock at night?"

"If Lady Chester has a grain of charity in her disposition," speaking very slowly, "she will say Miss St. Heliers is in the habit of using the breakfast-room as a private passage to the garden; so probably it was dropped hours before."

"Was it?" looking straight into her thoughtful eyes.

"No," she said, undauntedly, too proud to defend herself by a prevarication. "Now, think what you like."

"Pen my honours you are no coward," he exclaimed, in involuntary admiration. "Alverley's a lucky fellow!"

"Possibly he thinks you are to be more envied, if his arm is as bad as Miss Nicholson says me," turning away from the window, and taking up a book.

"At this moment of course he does," with a short laugh. "What wouldn't he give to exchange with me, and what wouldn't I have given to be in his place last night!"

"With Black George's shot in your arm?" her head bent down over a book of exercises.

"Yes, with you to bathe my forehead, and whisper soft words into my ear!"

"Enough of this," she said, starting up. "If you don't leave the room, I will."

"Stop a bit, we must come to terms first."

"Terms with a man who insults me!" her eyes flashing fire.

"If it is an insult to repeat what you did, it looks very bad for your actions."

"What you think I did may well be bad, if you judge from your own experience."

"Possibly, but I reason from induction." He came forward and placed himself before her, so as to compel her attention. "Alverley, to do him justice, is always ready enough for anything in the shape of a fight; but he was so behindhand last night that I was sent to look him up. When I found him, he was talking to someone under the trees. After the fray was over, and we had all returned to the house, Alverley was missing once again. We were standing about the hall, wondering what had become of him, when a peal rang out and startled us. The butler suggested that it was the breakfast-room bell, and we ran in to find the missing man fainting on the sofa, and your handkerchief dropped by his side. What will Lady Chester think when I tell her this story?" fixing his eyes upon her, as well as he could, when she appeared to be reading, imperturbably.

"And what is the wounded man like? I have met Mr. Jerningham, but I have never been introduced to the eldest son," she asked, after a pause, as if she suddenly remembered what he was talking about.

"Under some circumstances, introductions are dispensed with," he said, crossly.

"Perhaps so, between kitchen-maids and their sweethearts."

"As you don't contradict it, I shall believe that you had an assignation with Alverley in the park last night, and shall act accordingly."

"Act as you like, but I defy you to believe it!" her voice as firm and steady as a rock. "Anyone who knows Ruby St. Heliers would also know that she would not so disgrace herself, even for a valued friend, still less for a man whom she had never seen."

"Is this true?" trying to detect a falsehood in her clear eyes.

She shrugged her shoulders with ineffable contempt.

"And now I wish you good morning. I must leave the room, as you won't!"

"One moment," as he placed himself between her and the door. "Tell me once for all, is it to be peace or war?"

"War! Do you think anything else is possible after the way you have insulted me this morning?" and she looked him straight in the face.

"But I did not believe it, really," with sudden eagerness, for she looked so like the girl he loved that he could not harden his heart against her. "I was fairly puzzled."

"And yet you tried to trade on what you knew to be a lie. Go. You disgust me more and more."

"Take care," he said, sullenly, as he opened the door. "You had better not defy me."

"I do!" her courage rising at the first challenge. "I defy you now and always."

But when the door was closed, and Captain Marston was no longer there to sting her into forgetfulness of prudence, the fear that he might really have it in his power to ruin her position in Lady Chester's confidence presented itself obnoxiously to her mind. Of one thing she was perfectly certain, and that was that Lord Alverley—never do well as he was said to be—would not betray her, though she knew so little of him, except to his discredit. She was sure that she would keep a woman's counsel against the world. But Marston, in his wild passion for Violet, would hesitate neither at falsehood nor calumny if he thought that by means of either he could get one step nearer her; and the world was always credulous of evil, though hard to convince of truth.

Perhaps for her sister's sake she ought to have been careful to win him over to her side, but it was impossible for her to dissemble her feelings; and if she had gone so far as to bribe her tongue, the disgust with which he inspired her would certainly have flashed from her truthful eyes. Ah, me! if Harold Jerningham had been at home she would have felt that she had one friend in the house; but he was not due till Christmas Eve, when she hoped to be with Violet in homely Chatton-street, and Marston would probably amuse himself with telling him behind her back the base suspicions, which he had not been able to maintain before her face.

The children, running in presently, found her sitting before the fire, with her head resting dejectedly on her hand. She roused herself at once, took Marian on her knee, and let Beatrice hang about her neck.

"Oh, Miss Selleri!" said May, poking a sugar-plum into her mouth. "Alverley was so kind; he gave me a whole box full of sweets, and let Bee pull heaps of funny things out of his drawer. Do eat this, it is so deliciously good."

"And he asked all sorts of questions about you, and he sent you a message—don't, May, or you'll put it out of my head," said Bee, knitting her brows thoughtfully. "He says it would be only 'Christian charity' if you would come to-morrow and write a letter for him. All his friends are at home to-day, so he doesn't want you just yet, but I daresay he wouldn't mind it, if you liked to go."

Ruby smiled.

"Why doesn't he ask his friends to do it for him?"

"Cause you'd do it so nicely—men are such stupid things."

"Did he seem in much pain?"

"He frowned like that," drawing her eyebrows together again, "just now and then, like papa when he has the gout, but he wasn't a bit cross; and he laughed when I told him

about the other day, when Captain Marston—isn't that his name?—carried us all over the stream."

"He did not carry me."

"I thought he did; and Alverley said, 'Pon my honour, he's a lucky man,' imitating her brother exactly."

"And he said we must go there again," said Marian, nodding her head, "so never mind."

"But you should not talk so wildly. I climbed across on the trunk of a tree," said Ruby, much provoked at being supposed to have suffered such an indignity. "Never talk such nonsense again. And now," relaxing into a smile, "as you cannot have any other exercise, run into the passage and have a game of ball."

"Not without you."

"You must come too."

"Now do, dear Miss Brown-eyes," coaxed Bee; "you look as if you had got a bad arm like poor Alverley, for you are quite as pale."

Yielding, as she generally did, to their persuasions, Ruby put aside her troubles, and joined in the game as merrily as either of the others.

Captain Marston heard the peals of happy laughter as he passed along the gallery, but the door into the passage was closed, and he had not the courage to open it. If he had done so he would have been surprised to see Ruby's laughing face, and would certainly have been led to the conclusion that his threats had fallen harmless on her brave heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

"You see, miss, I couldn't well help it," said Mrs. Nicholson apologetically, as she ran a watchful eye along the school-room mantelpiece, to see if it had been properly dusted. "I never breathed your name to him, but it seems as if the dear children had let their tongues run away with them as usual, for he asked me straight out, if I thought Miss St. Heliers would think it too great a trouble to write a letter for him. That girl Anna has only just skinned round the edges of things without moving them, and I always call that dunting like a Pharisee. But what answer am I to take to this dordship?" she added, suddenly, removing her eyes from the scene of the housemaid's delinquencies.

"Tell him that he had better ask one of his friends," said Ruby, with a slight smile. "It is strange that he should think of applying to me."

"Well, I'm glad you've said it," sinking her voice, confidentially. "The Countess is coming home to-morrow, and she might have put two and two together, and thought—one never knows what a lady mayn't think when it's about her own son."

"No; as someone says, 'women are little cattle.'"

"Well, I never! It must be a man who said it, and I'll thank him for his impudence. I should like to know what he calls his own sex, if he speaks so disrespectful of ours?" And the housekeeper looked quite indignant. "But never you mind, miss, if anyone says a word against you, just you send him or her to me, and I'll stand up for you. I've heard from Watson's wife of your carrying a bottle of medicine to his son the other night; and it isn't many ladies who would have taken the trouble to do that—such a bitter cold evening as it was, too!"

The colour rushed into Ruby's cheeks, but Mrs. Nicholson never noticed it as she hurried away to give her message.

Lord Alverley expostulated loudly, but she told him that the young lady was none of them shilly-shally ones, and always meant what she said.

He was very cross, and called it "absurd, prudish nonsense," and employed the children as his messengers later on in the day. But they were sent away with the same answer; and the young fellow, who had never been crossed by a woman in his life, promised to

pay her out for it when he was no longer a prisoner.

Ruby, on the other hand, was dreading her first meeting with him in public, knowing that if she did not wish to risk all kinds of awkward questions being addressed to her, they must appear to be perfect strangers.

Mrs. Nicholson told Lady Chester, when she arrived from town, that Miss St. Heliers had behaved with great discretion, and kept so carefully in the western tower, that she had never come across any of the gentlemen in the eastern or "bachelor's wing." The Countess nodded her approval, and said that was just what she would have expected from a young lady of such perfect breeding; but asked anxiously if Lord Alverley had ever caught sight of her.

"No, my lady, not but what he tried," and a broad smile came over the housekeeper's kindly face. "I think the young ladies must have told him about her, for he was wonderfully set on her writing a letter for him; but she let him know that he might ask one of his friends, and would have nothing to do with it."

"That is well," with a sigh of relief. "When Alverley's in the house I never have a moment's peace; and this girl is so dangerously pretty. All the rooms will have to be well-sired, for I expect a large party down for Christmas." The conversation drifted into household details, and the Countess found that it was time to dress for dinner, before she had paid a visit to the schoolroom.

Dressed in black velvet, with old lace gracefully arranged on her smooth fair hair, she came out of her bedroom by the door which led into the passage in the western wing. Passing Ruby's door she entered the schoolroom, with a pleasant smile upon her face, for it was always a pleasure to her to come and see her children.

Both the little girls were working diligently; one on Ruby's knee, the other on a stool at her feet, whilst she told them a wonderful story. It was a very pretty group, the firelight playing on May's bright curls and Bee's upturned gipsy face, which contrasted well in its vivid colouring with the pale sweet purity of the countenance just above it. Then the story stopped, the children sprang to their feet, and Ruby stood up with a slight accession of colour.

Lady Chester kissed the children affectionately, stretched out a hand in cordial greeting to their governess, asked if her little daughters had been good during her absence, and scarcely waited for the answer. The gong sounded, and she hurried away, hoping to see Miss St. Heliers in the drawing-room when dinner was over.

Ruby had but two evening dresses. Her father, Sir Charles St. Heliers, of St. Heliers-mount, Cornwall, died from a fall out hunting, and her mother, who was in delicate health at the time, never recovered from the shock, but followed him soon to the grave. Owing to rash speculations, into which he had been led by Captain Marston's father, the baronet's affairs were found to be seriously involved. The Mount had to be sold, and only a wretched pittance was secured for his daughters. The girls found a temporary home with Mrs. Capel in Chatterton-street, and Violet was left under her care when Ruby accepted an engagement at the Chase. Mrs. Capel had been their nurse in former years before she retired on her savings; and she watched over the pretty girl left in her charge like a very dragon.

Ruby was thinking of them both, as she looked doubtfully at the black tulle and the black grenadine; and how Mrs. Capel would have sighed over the scantiness of her young lady's wardrobe! She decided in favour of the grenadine, reflecting that the tulle, being her only best dress, must be reserved for a best occasion.

"Thank goodness," she said to herself, as she opened the drawing-room door, "Lord Alverley is too ill to come down," but she had not taken three steps into the room before she caught sight of him, to her great discomfiture,

lying on a sofa, with a gorgeous Eastern dressing-gown thrown over the rest of his evening things.

Seeming not to know he was there, she walked straight to the piano, and began to undo her roll of music, feeling that Captain Marston's eyes were fixed upon her, and knowing full well that Lord Alverley's head was turned in her direction with curiosity as well as interest.

"Mother," he said in that soft rich voice, which bore such a likeness to his brother's, "you have not introduced me to Miss St. Heliers."

Lady Clementina raised her head in surprise; Captain Marston pulled his moustaches, and the Countess murmured the necessary words as if rather against her will. "You must excuse me, but I cannot get up to shake hands," he said, with a smile and a mischievous twinkle in his half-closed eyes.

Ruby bent her graceful neck with perfect composure, but she was covered with shame at being forced to act what she considered to be a lie; and felt unable to meet Captain Marston's eye as he came forward to shake hands, remarking, with needless falsehood, "It seems strange to think that we have been under the same roof for the last ten days without meeting. I thought that Lady Chester had carried her whole family up to London."

"Indeed! I was afraid lest the children might have made too much noise sometimes over their game of ball in the passage. I am glad you did not hear it."

"Or I might have been tempted to intrude," watching her face keenly, and thinking, "What an actress the girl is to be sure!"

"No; you would have known that beyond the baize door is a forbidden land to gentlemen," with an accent on the last word.

"And nothing is so tempting as a forbidden land," he answered, with a laugh. "Don't you agree with me, Lady Clementine?"

"Well, I believe Adam and Eve never thought Eden half as desirable as when they were turned out," she assented, with a charming smile.

"Here the angel was inside the doors, not out," murmured Lord Alverley, in a soft aside, which was perfectly audible to Ruby, as he stood half-way between his sofa and the piano, with the light of the chandelier falling full upon her slight well-rounded figure and bright brown hair. "Clem, won't you give us a song?"

"Not yet, I want to talk."

"Nonsense; you are doing that all day long, and you told me that you had brought a whole budget of new songs down from town. Marston, too, has got a duet he is dying to sing with you."

"Have you?" turning to him with eager eyes. "Pray let us try it at once."

"I am afraid my gruff voice will scarcely harmonize with your pure soprano," not stirring from his chair.

"We cannot tell till we try; and this evening, when we are almost alone, affords us a very good opportunity. What is the name of it?"

"Oh! tell me where she is," by Mallison. I believe it is a translation from the French. If you really care to see it I must fetch it," and rising, reluctantly, he left the room.

"So sorry to hear, Miss St. Heliers," said the Countess, looking up from her knitting. "that Watson's boy has been so ill with typhoid fever. I hope the doctor paid him proper attention; and that he had everything he wanted from the house?"

"I believe so. Mrs. Watson said that Mrs. Nicholson had been very kind. Poor woman, she was in great trouble when he was delirious; she thought he would be mad for the rest of his life."

"What a goose!" exclaimed Clementina, impatiently, "as if nobody had been delirious before."

"It is a most unpleasant thing to watch," put in Lord Alverley, to their surprise; for he rarely interested himself when their conversation ran upon what he called dry details. "I remember a fellow at Eton, after a kick on

the head at football, four boys were holding him down, when he broke from them, and tried to pitch himself out of the window. I came in at the door just in time to see him try it, and held on to his legs like grim death, till some of the fellows came to pull him in. It was touch and go, I can tell you. I never was so frightened in my life."

"Horrible!" shuddered the Countess. "Only think if you had not been there!"

"But then you see I am always 'on the spot,'" with a side-long glance at Ruby, "sometimes when I am not wanted."

"More often than not, I daresay, if the truth were known," and Clementine leant over him affectionately. "I am sure if I were up to anything rather ticklish I should like you to be out of the way, because, though you choose to keep your sleepy eyes half shut, as a rule, you are certain to see more than anyone else. Is this cushion comfortable?"

"Not at all, thank you, and you've made it worse. Here, look at this, and give me the English of it;" he held up the book which had been lying topsy-turvy on his lap. "I think there ought to be a law against admitting German verses in an English novel."

"German!" she exclaimed, in horror, as he had intended her to do. "I never knew much about it, but all that I did know I have quite forgotten. Well, Captain Marston, have you found the song?"

"Yes; but I don't know if we shall be able to manage it, the accompaniment is very complicated."

"Then, for heaven's sake, if you are going to murder it, do it decently in the other room. Mother, do you know German?"

"No; but Miss St. Heliers does; perhaps she will come to your assistance."

"Will you?" with an imploring glance. "I shall be most grateful."

Ruby rose, and came towards him with an imperturbable gravity.

"Pray sit down. Here, Marston, give that chair a shave. Thanks." He caught it with his right hand, drew it close to the sofa, and rested his arm on the back of it to keep in its place till she had sat down. Then he withdrew it with a satisfied smile, and pointed to the poem, for the translation of which he seemed to have such a devouring thirst. "Have you ever seen it before?"

"Yes, often; 'The pine tree and the palm' have become quite hackneyed in their separate solitudes. That is the point of it, the palm-tree cannot climb the snowy height, the pine cannot come down into the scorching sun."

And then, knowing that his eyes were fixed upon her face, looking for an answering glance, she translated the two verses, line by line, without looking up.

Lady Clementine and Captain Marston were warbling at the further end of the smaller drawing-room. The Countess, tired after her journey, was nodding over her ivory needles; Lord Alverley had his opportunity, and used it.

"I think you might make a touching parody on it," he said, slowly. "Out of the opposite extremities of this old barrack of a house; the man who was languishing in the east wing; the girl who would not come to him from the west. Why were you so cruel?"

"How is your arm, Lord Alverley?" with polite interest. "I hope the pain has gone off."

"It hasn't; but I know I am to expect no sympathy from you. Do you remember," very softly, "when you thought that I was going off the hooks?"

The colour stole into her cheeks as she turned the pages slowly, but she said nothing.

"I can see you better now than when I had to resort to a miserable match. Good gracious, how you scolded me!" smiling at the remembrance. "Haven't you forgiven me yet?"

"No," lowering her voice, so as to be heard only by him. "I thought you mean that, meaner still in the breakfast-room"—a sunset glow upon her cheeks—"and meanest of all to-night."

"To-night!" he echoed, in surprise.

"Because you will not let me forget what it is *intolerable* to remember." She turned her head, but her bosom heaved, and the small, white hand that held the book trembled.

"It is intolerable to you to think that you saved my life!" very slowly, with his eyes wide open.

"No, not that quite; but I wish to forget that night, and you must do the same."

"Impossible! it is the pleasantest thing I have to remember—secret debt which binds us both together, unknown to all outsiders," after a careful look round at his mother to see if she were still asleep. "Circumstances have driven us helter-skelter into the most romantic friendship."

Ruby shook her head.

"There is no use in denying it. We can never be simply as we should have been if we had not met that night. I owe you my life—and more than that," softly. "Do you think I shall ever forget? Stop, don't go. I came down tonight, when I was feeling awfully seedy, on purpose to speak to you. And this is what I want to say. It is your wish that we should appear to be semi-strangers when we meet in public, so be it. I only want to do and to be, what you think best. But in *private*, as we must meet often, or I cannot be content, you will be my sweet little Ruby to me, and I, your devoted friend, Alverley. Hush! they are coming!"

She rose to her feet, murmuring "no," unconsciously carrying off his book. He stretched out his arm, and took it from her, keeping hold of her hand for an instant. She drew it away hastily, but not till he had slipped his own solid gold serpent-ring upon her third finger.

"When you want me, send it to me; and I'll come—unless I'm dead," he said, very earnestly, and then she walked towards the table where she had laid her work, feeling rather dazed and bewildered.

Lady Clementine came in, followed by the dragoon, laughing and hoping they had been edified.

"I didn't mind it much, because I shut my ears," said her brother, reassuringly. "Are we to have it in here, or shall we appeal to Miss St. Heliers?"

"Oh, let Miss St. Heliers give us a song," suggested the Countess, who had just opened her eyes, and wanted it to be supposed that she had never closed them. "She must be tired of that piece of work she has been doing so industriously."

Alverley smiled, and wondered what his mother would have thought of his employment if she had known!

CHAPTER IX.

Ruby was just on the point of starting for a walk to the rectory with her little pupils, when Lady Chester beckoned her into her boudoir, and told the children to run downstairs and wait in the garden.

"I won't detain you a minute," she said, graciously; "but I wanted to mention to you that as you arrived such a short time ago, and the children's studies were unfortunately so long interrupted before your arrival, I had come to the conclusion that we would dispense with the usual Christmas holidays this year."

Ruby's face fell, all the promised joys of a month with Violet vanishing from her grasp. The Countess, mistaking the cause of her visible annoyance, added hastily, "Of course we should consider it only just to make an addition to your ordinary salary; and you have so won the hearts of the children that they both declared, they would rather go on with their lessons than lose their dear Miss 'Stellier.' I hope this will not inconvenience you," noticing Ruby's hesitation.

The pale, proud face flushed like a white rose in the glow of the dawn. "I was thinking of my sister; she will be so dreadfully disappointed."

"I am sorry for that; but perhaps you

could persuade her to pay you a visit down here?"

"Thank you, you are very kind." How delightful it would be to have Violet with her under the same roof once more, and to feel the schoolroom for ever associated with the remembrance of her lovely, loving eyes! But no, not whilst Captain Marston was at the Chase! That would be to bring the innocent bird into the snare by the very hand that had kept her from it with such tender care. Looking up she met Lady Chester's eyes fixed upon her in some surprise. No doubt she was wondering why her offer was not jumped at.

"Perhaps she might come down for a day, a little later on," she said, hesitatingly. "But, of course, you will let me go to her on Christmas Day; we could not be separated then?"

"Of course, if you make a point of it; but you will find the trains very inconvenient, and probably filled with tipsy people."

"Then perhaps you would let me stay till the following morning?" with quiet persistency.

"If you wish it, but that would be Boxing Day, and I would not travel on such a day as that for a thousand pounds."

"But perhaps you would," and a sweet smile hovered round her lips, "if it were to give you a few hours longer with some one whom you would be glad to be with?"

"I am sure I don't know," carelessly, "but you can do it if you like; only you must not hold me responsible for the consequences."

"No, I like best to answer for myself. Is there anything else you wish to tell me?"

"Not to-day. It is a beautiful morning, I hope you will enjoy your walk," and with a gracious smile Ruby was dismissed.

May and Beatrice shouted with delight when they heard that they were not going to lose her for a whole, long month.

They clapped their hands and jumped round her in exuberant glee, their small scarlet-clad legs twinkling on the frost bespangled grass, their cheeks glowing with health and happiness, their eyes as bright as the frozen dew-drops on the hollies.

Every branch and tiny twig had its elaborate lace work from the unsparring hand of nature.

There was scarcely a cloud to mar the blue of the skies, and the sun shone down on a glorified world of sparkling jewels.

It was a day to make a healthy man thank God for giving him life—a day to make the cripple think of the land which would be brighter even than this, and where there would be "neither halt nor lame," but all should enjoy the rapture of a new and perfect life.

On their way through the park, they stopped at Mrs. Watson's to leave some jelly for the invalid; and Ruby's thoughts flew back to the night when she stood outside in the darkness, fearing to move on, or to stay behind.

The boy was better, but fast asleep; so they postponed their visit to another day, and proceeded on their way to the rectory.

The Rev. Fabian and Mrs. Upton lived in the prettiest rectory in the Bishop of —'s diocese.

The house was of greystone, with pointed windows, overhung by massive wreaths of ivy.

The doorway was like the porch of a church; indeed, the whole rectory looked as if it were an offshoot of the venerable ivy-grown building with the massive square tower, which was only separated by the graveyard, with its simple wooden crosses and a low stone wall, from the rector's garden.

There was an air of holy peace about the place, which was especially comforting to the weary and heart laden when they came to pour out their sorrows in that haven of rest.

Ruby felt its influence as she stretched out her hand to ring the bell.

"I should like to be a clergyman's wife," she thought to herself, as she rubbed her neat little boots on the door-mat, "and my house should be just like this."

Mrs. Upton, fat, fair, and fifty, arrayed in the grey woollen dress which she had always

worn from time immemorial on winter week-days, looked up from the table where she was busy cutting out, disentangled her thumb from a huge pair of scissors, and stretched out her hand in cordial greeting.

"You are very welcome, my dear; find yourself a chair if you can, and tell me why it is that I can't get a whole pair of sleeves out of this piece of calico, when I cut two without any patch out of the other? Give me a kiss," to Beatrice and Marian, "and then run like good children, for your legs are younger than mine, and ask Bridget if she has made any of those Chelsea buns lately that you used to be so fond of?"

The children apparently knew their way, and liked it, for they disappeared with prompt obedience; and Ruby, taking up the piece of stuff, turned and twisted it in every way imaginable, till she had contrived to place the two pattern sleeves in their proper places, and so demonstrated that it was equally possible to cut out another pair.

"You are a clever girl," and Mrs. Upton nodded her head approvingly. "They say that 'She who cuts nor wastes the stuff, will make a smooth road from a rough.'"

"I am sure I wish I could."

"And so you will, my dear, if you will go the right way to work. With patience and hope for companions, you will get to the end of the journey without sore feet."

"But, remember, there are two of us."

"And it is always easier for two together, than one alone," she interrupted, cheerfully. "The heart narrows when its interests are centred in itself, and the selfish, lonely egotist, who has no one to think of but himself, has fewer joys than the hard-working mother of many children. There is nothing like work for making you happy, and I don't pity you like that poor thing, Lady Clementina, who has to fancy herself in love with that good-looking dragoon, because she has nothing to do!"

"I will wait, at all events, till the man falls in love with me," said Ruby, with her soft laugh, as she went on deftly with her cutting out.

"Ay, do, my dear, and don't do it then; for, believe me, there's more harm done by marrying the wrong man than by waiting too long for the right. Do you always baste the seams of a body?" holding up a brown garment, thick as a blanket, and certainly not as ornamental.

"I certainly shan't when I make one for myself."

"Then I won't do it for Mary Jones. Her gown must not be made better than lady's, which is making an excuse for my laziness, out of the old-fashioned prejudice of social distinction. Fabian says of me that I lay my hand on everything, and turn it to my own profit, all because of an old joke he has against me. It was many years ago, when I was not so worldly-wise as I am now, and my heart was as soft as a piece of cotton-wool. There was a young fellow in our village, who was always getting into scrapes, till my father and Fabian were obliged to give him up as a bad job. I had a fancy-foolish young thing that I was—that I could make him listen to me, when he had turned a deaf ear to rector and curate; so I put on my bonnet one bonny morning in June, and walked over to his father's farm. After looking for him in the cow-sheds, stables, farmyard and all about, I discovered him lying on his face in the long grass, half-hidden in the buttercups. 'Get up, Tom, for shame,' I called out, angrily, for I had a wonderful spirit of my own. 'Don't you know you're spoiling your father's grass!'"

"Shame to them as druv me to it," he answered, like a great rough bear. "It's never a kind word I get from any one of 'em, and it's more nor human nature can stand. I wish I could die—ay, that I do, and get out of this beastly hole, where I am preached at from morning to night, and never a helping hand to get a fellow out of a mess, only a kick to send him further in."

"Now this sort of thing instead of angering

me went straight to my heart, and I stood there for half-an-hour or more arguing with him, till I thought I had made him as soft as milk. He stood up quite shamefaced at last, and said, with a great tear running down his brown cheek, that he would go over to Cressingham, and make a start for himself; but he hadn't got a farthing in his pocket."

"How much money would you want, Tom?" putting my hand into my pocket, for my father had just paid me my quarter's allowance.

"I'd do with five pounds to begin with," he said, as coolly as you please. "That would keep me from starving till I could get some work together."

"Well, to cut a long story short, I gave it him, and went home as proud as a peacock, crowing over my father and Fabian because my poor weak voice had had more influence than theirs. They both said 'wait and see'; but I never did care about waiting, and I thought I had seen. Two days passed, and then Fabian put his face in at the door. 'Miss Janet, the converted prodigal was picked up last night in a ditch near Crossley Bottom, insensible, with twopenny-halfpenny in his pocket. That is all that remains of your five pounds!'"

"I could have burst out crying, I was so terribly disappointed; but I was determined not to let him see it, so I called out just as he shut the door, 'Never mind, I'm very glad he had the money, for it must have very much improved his opinion of human nature.' My dear," as Ruby burst out laughing, "I never heard the last of it. And all the three months I had to screw, with worn-out gloves and patched-up boots. My father would say, with a wink at my shabbiness, 'Never mind, Janie, you have sacrificed yourself for the sake of human nature.'"

"And what became of the wretched Tom?" inquired Ruby with interest, as she proceeded with her work.

"Fabian took him in hand after that, and made a better job of it than I did. But I've talked to much about myself, when I wanted to know what brought that cloud upon your face this morning when there's none to be seen in the heavens. Have you been grieved about anything, my dear?" looking anxiously at her across the table, with her spectacles pushed high on her forehead.

Grateful for her sympathy, Ruby told of her great disappointment in a gentle uncomplaining way that went straight to Mrs. Upton's kindly heart. After asking a great many questions about Violet, she proposed that she should come and spend a quiet week at the Rectory, if she could put up with a prosy old couple, for the sake of being near her sis'.

Ruby sprang from her seat and seized Mrs. Upton's hand in both her own. "How wonderfully good you are to me!" she cried, her soft eyes full of tears. "Thank you, again and again."

Mrs. Upton kissed her affectionately, and said it was no kindness; but she should look forward to having a young bright thing in the house as a rare treat.

Then the children ran in with a Chelsea bun which they had begged of Bridget for Ruby; and soon they started homewards across the park, late for dinner as usual, laughing so much as they hurried along that Bee tumbled over an ant-hill, and May had to stand still and gasp.

(To be continued.)

MR. PEET, a rather diffident man, was unable to prevent himself from being introduced one evening to a fascinating young lady, who, misunderstanding his name, constantly addressed him as Mr. Peters, much to the gentleman's distress. Finally, summoning courage, he bashfully but earnestly remonstrated: "O! I don't call me Peters—call me Peet." "Ah, but I don't know you well enough, Mr. Peters," said the young lady, blushing, as she playfully withdrew part way behind her fan.

WHEN THE STARS COME OUT.

WHEN the stars come out in the evening sky,
A sense of peace on my soul descends,
All worldly incentives pass me by,
And my thoughts are afar with my vanished
friends;
And, of all the faint or effulgent orbs
That people the night in that golden rout,
There is never a one but my soul absorbs
When the stars come out.

You sphere of the amber and creamy light,
How like my mother's sweet smile it seems!
And the lesser near it, more feebly bright,
How like the sister's I see in dreams!
While the loving familiars, that with them
sought
The realm afar, is that group about
Their steadfast place, to my soulful thought
When the stars come out.

A brother's old glance and a father's grave,
Deep look in yon bolder orbs I see;
And ah! with what tenderness, wave on wave,
From that violet star descends to me
The spirit-love that my coming awaits,
Beyond despondence, and death, and doubt,
With a trembling chord that unites our fates,
When the stars come out.

Thus, crystal clear was her soul, her heart
Thus a-throb with passion as pure and fond—
Oh, my lost, lost love! in such heights thou
art
That I sometimes fear thee my reach beyond,
Till again, calm shining, those hosts, whose
scope
Had seemed for the moment my faith to
flout,
New trust enkindle, new life and hope,
When the stars come out.

Yes; worlds upon worlds, with immensity,
I know, in the clasp of their rhythmic
sweep!
But still not less for the gone and me
This strong, sweet faith do they living keep;
And, exalted ever, my thoughts arise,
With the brightest akin in that golden rout,
To the love eternal beyond the skies,
When the stars come out!

C. C.

STRAYED AWAY;

A STORY OF A LOVE.

CHAPTER LVIII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

The deep despondency of feeling had retarded Fanny's recovery to an extent that made hers an almost hopeless case. The skill of the physician had done its best, but the sad sickness of the mind required a ministering they could not give. In the whole theory and practice of medicine there is no known remedy for a broken heart.

They gave baby to her, but she could not keep him long. The little fellow took it into his head to make more noise than was consistent with the quietude necessary for the other patients, and so he had to be taken out by his grandfather. Fanny was left alone then with her mother and Mrs. Wilson.

The latter lady noticed that during the interview Fanny did not once mention Percy. It was not a token that she had forgotten or ceased to love him, but it was a sure sign that hope was dead—that she did not dream he would ever return.

"When you are well enough you must come and stay with me," said Mrs. Wilson. "You will require a change of scene, my child, and I am going into the country. Are you fond of the country?"

"Yes." Fanny was fond of the country, though she had seen little of it in the course of her existence. Her glimpses of the fresh and verdant hills, green fields, and budding hedge-

rows had been few and far between, for her rural excursions had rarely extended beyond Gravesend, Hampton Court, or Erith—like most of the daughters of the humble. Brought up to toil, she was more familiar with the dusty streets and smoky skies of London than anything else.

"My husband's brother lives in the country," said Mrs. Wilson, "at a pretty place named Caswell, on the borders of Westmoreland. He is a clergyman, and has a living there. I will write to him soon, Frances, and tell him we are coming."

Fanny tried to smile.

"I may not live, dear Mrs. Wilson. I have seen the doctors standing round my bed, and heard their whispers to each other, and I know what they mean. They do not think I shall get over it."

"Hush, darling! We must not speak, or think so. Surely you wish to live?"

She was answered by a sad silence.

"For baby's sake, for your parents, and your friends, and for him who may come back to you, after all."

"He never will," sobbed Fanny, and she drew from beneath her pillow the letter which was found locked in her hand when she was taken from the river. "He never will, or how could he have sent me this?"

It was Percy's letter; in which he told her that his love had been the bitter lesson of his life—his ruin, and that while she lived he was fettered by a tie that would always drag him down. No wonder Mrs. Wilson thought that when the young wife read it she was driven to despair; the letter almost told her to make the sacrifice she tried to make.

"If by any chance he should learn what has happened through it," said Mrs. Wilson, "he will repent bitterly of this. You have been sorely tried, my child, but be sure that Heaven has not tried you so without a purpose. The end of suffering is near; the beginning of happiness is to come."

Arthur's mother left Fanny and Mrs. West together then, while she spoke a few words to the house-surgeon. She knew as well as did that gentleman the nature of the next ordeal Fanny would have to pass, and wished to save her from it.

Mrs. Wilson told him just enough to interest him in Fanny's history, and she was careful to remove any impression he might have that Fanny was not a wife.

"I love her as if she were my own daughter," Mrs. Wilson said; "and I know that, with her extreme delicacy of temperament, any term of imprisonment would be fatal to her. She has borne too much already."

"But what can we do?" asked the surgeon, gravely. "The law must take its course."

"But if I appear in court and answer for her future good conduct, and I am sure she will never repeat the rash attempt."

"I am afraid, my dear madam, the magistrate will still feel himself compelled to inflict some punishment, as an example and a deterrent to others."

"But if you send in a certificate," said Mrs. Wilson, laying her still beautiful hand on the surgeon's arm, "to the effect that any kind of punishment might have a fatal effect, surely the influence of a physician, aided by humanity, will be stronger than the law."

"And the influence of a lady stronger than either," he smiled. "Well, Mrs. Wilson, we will do our best for your protege."

"Thanks—many thanks." With that promise of the kind-hearted man's assistance Mrs. Wilson was quite content. She relied upon her own power to deal with the magistrate, and so lighten the burden for Frances.

"Do not forget," said the surgeon, "that we shall have to give notice to the police authorities of the time when the young lady leaves the hospital."

"Does that mean that she will go direct from here to the police-court?"

"Yes."

"Then I will be there, too; and you," she

added, persuasively, "will come and bring the certificate."

He could not say "no" while the subdued beauty of those grave, grey eyes was upon him; so he pressed her hand and promised.

Mrs. Wilson saw Fanny as frequently as she could afford this, and gradually broke the truth to her. Fanny was recovering now, growing stronger, and she could bear the new trial with fortitude, knowing that Mrs. Wilson would be by her side. To her simple mind the idea of appearing in a police-court appeared terrible, till the doctor's widow explained away its terrors.

She took counsel with her son as to the best manner of proceeding, and Arthur's advice was to the point.

"If the parents of poor Frances are in court," he said, "it had better be merely as spectators. The magistrate will ask if any of her friends are there, and you can appear at once. Position is respected by the law, and Frances will be treated with more consideration for your sake than she would for her parents."

Mrs. Wilson suggested as much to the Wests, and they were glad to leave the matter in her hands. So, on the day when Fanny was to leave the hospital, Mr. and Mrs. West waited with Arthur at the court, while Mrs. Wilson went to fetch Fanny. She found a policeman there.

"You are waiting for the young lady who was taken from the river," she said to the constable.

"Yes, mum. Attempted suicide."

"I have a cab outside; there is no objection, I presume, to her going in it with me?"

"Well, mum, you see—"

The lady slid half-a-crown quietly into his hand.

"No, mum, no objection, except that the young person's in my charge, and I must not lose sight of her."

"The young lady is a friend of mine, and I wish to have the matter conducted with as much privacy as possible. Would it be convenient for a constable in plain clothes to attend?"

"I might have done that if I had thought of it."

"I wish you could so arrange it still. The lady will not be ready for nearly an hour."

"More than an hour," put in the surgeon. "So, if you have not far to go, my man, you could do it easily."

Mrs. Wilson's hand went to her purse again, and a second half-crown found its way to the constable's pocket. Bribing the force is prohibited, but you may make a man a present for his civility.

The man was civil enough to depart and return in plain clothes—such plain clothes as are only worn by policemen in a feeble attempt to disguise themselves. His hat had been out of date several years, and his clothes might have fitted him when he first entered the force. He lost much of his dignity when he laid aside his uniform, and seemed singularly unhappy in misfit.

He sat on the box by the driver's side, and they talked of the case inside. They entered into mutual experiences like men to whom such things were familiar—men to whom such things were a matter of course, so little emotion did either display.

"Think she will get anything?" the cabman asked, as they went into Rochester-row.

"A month, most likely."

"Pity. She seems a pretty critter."

"They are none the better for that," said the constable, sagely. "I've generally found them wags. However, here we are."

The surgeon was in the cab, and he handed Fanny out, paying her that gentlemanly attention in respect for Mrs. Wilson. Arthur was in the court. He had taken up his position near the dock, so that he could touch Fanny's hand as she passed.

Arthur had the forethought to arrange so that Fanny should not be placed in a cell to wait till her name was called, and she was

permitted to remain in the care of her friends. The case soon came on.

"Frances West," called the usher. And Fanny entered on Arthur Wilson's arm. His presence, and the undoubted respectability of her friends, saved her from much abrupt treatment. The poor girl's heart sank when the jailer opened the door of the little dock, and motioned her to go in.

"Don't be afraid," Arthur whispered. "Be quite calm."

She thanked him with a look, and then turned from the crowd of curious faces in the body of the court. The delicate beauty of her appearance created a favourable impression, and there was a murmur of sympathy.

"What is the charge?" asked the magistrate, reading with the keen eye of experience that it was nothing criminal.

"Attempting to commit suicide, your worship."

"State the case."

The clerk called the constable in plain clothes, and he got into the witness-box.

"I was on duty, your worship, on —— night at Westminster-bridge, when I heard a splash, and a young man ran by me and jumped into the water. I heard him call for help, and I ran down the steps, and he was bringing the prisoner to shore."

"You helped him, then?"

"Yes, your worship."

"Is the young man in court?"

"Yes, your worship."

William Gibson was called then. He gave his evidence quietly, and as though he hoped what he said might not do Fanny any injury. The magistrate complimented him on his courage, and gave him ten shillings from the poor-box.

"Is anything known of the prisoner?" asked the magistrate, and then Mrs. Wilson entered the witness-box. The self-possession of the stately lady was not shaken by the novelty of her position. To her the clerks and police were servants of the public; the magistrate, a gentleman placed on the bench to perform a duty—a duty exceedingly well paid for, though an arduous duty while the law remains in its present indefinite state.

Mrs. Wilson told the magistrate briefly that Fanny was the wife of a gentleman of position; and that his desertion of her had caused her to attempt the rash act. She paid a high tribute to Fanny's character, and was careful to avoid anything like a whab to create effect by throwing sentiment into her tone. She knew that the gentleman on the bench only dealt with bare facts. A crime had been attempted, and he would only admit plain truths in extenuation.

He listened politely to Mrs. Wilson—listened even attentively, and glanced from time to time at Fanny, whose sad face touched him. Then he signed for Mrs. Wilson to leave the box, and he spoke to Fanny.

"You have been guilty of a most serious offence," he said, "and I hope that your timely escape from it will be a lesson to you in future. Only think that, but for the bravery of the young man who preserved your life at the risk of his own, you might now be in the presence of your Maker, with the sin of self-destruction on your head."

Fanny's lips quivered, but she said nothing. Her strength and courage were fast sinking under the gaze of the curious crowd in court.

"These cases are unfortunately too prevalent," the magistrate continued, "and I am compelled to make an example of you. But for the evidence of the lady who has spoken so kindly in your behalf, I should have passed you a severer sentence. You will be committed for twenty-one days to the House of Detention, where you will have the advice of the chaplain."

Poor Fanny reeled back on to the seat, and a woman's cry came from the body of the court. Arthur was about to speak, but the surgeon stopped him, and begged for a few words with his worship. His wish was granted.

"In the present shattered state of her

nervous system," he said, "I would not answer for her life for a single day. She requires constant nursing. I recommend her to the care of her friends. Permit me to give you this certificate to that effect from the physician in attendance."

The magistrate looked at the certificate. He did not like to reverse his decision.

"There is a surgeon in the House of Detention," he said.

Mrs. Wilson's friend bowed.

"I have only to say that I wish to save you from the painful consequences of an otherwise perfectly just sentence," he said, "and I must beg to repeat it."

"Very well," said the magistrate, retiring with good grace. "The prisoner is to be given to the care of her friends, who will enter into recognizances to bring her up if called upon."

Arthur Wilson put the jailer aside, and lifted Fanny from the dock. Most of the people in court, and the magistrate, even, were not without a suspicion that he was the guilty husband just beginning to repent; in fact, as he was leading her out, one rough-and-ready gentleman, in a fustian jacket and corduroys, said, in a low tone,—

"I suppose you will take better care of her in future, old man?"

Arthur only smiled. The strength of a pure heart upheld him.

They went into the clerk's office, and old Bill West entered into his own recognizances, that is to say, gave a guarantee that he would produce Fanny if called upon to do so; and then the painful business was over. The carpenter was rather overpowered at the thought of having gone into a compact with no formidable thing as the law; but Arthur reassured him.

"What does it mean?" said old Bill. "Will they want me to take her up there just whenever they like?"

"No," smiled Arthur; "only in the event of her attempting such an act again."

The carpenter gave a sigh of relief. "She won't do that, sir. She's been too near death, Fanny has not to know how sweet life is, even at the worst of it; and there is some good in store for her, after all."

Fanny, with her mother and Mrs. Wilson, went to Camberwell in the cab. Jem walked home with William Gibson, to whom he had taken a strong liking. Arthur stayed behind, to thank the kindly surgeon for his aid; and then he and old Bill West walked to the carpenter's house together.

Mr. West felt shy, at first, of walking by the side of Mrs. Wilson's handsome son; but Arthur's frankness set him at his ease, and he quite astonished the carpenter by his perfect knowledge of the manners and customs of the poor. To have heard him speak one night have thought he had been one of them in fact, instead of in sympathy.

The little party was assembled in the parlour when they arrived. Fanny, with her baby in her arms, on the sofa, her mother by her side, and Mrs. Wilson busying herself in preparing tea. The lady won Jem's heart by her unaffected kindness. She sent him out for such things as were needed, quieted the little ones, out bread-and-butter for them, and took upon herself the care of the household for the time. That scene in the parlour had a history that Arthur, in the largeness of his soul, could read in the faces of the girl, redeemed from death, and her parents, who watched her with such deep gratitude. They had asked no questions yet; but they had wondered much to hear Mrs. Wilson state in court that Fanny was a wife.

"Yes, it is the truth," said Arthur, when old Bill asked him in a whisper. "Frances," and he kissed her slender hand, "Frances has kept her secret long enough, and it is time justice was done."

The old fondness returned when he looked at her; not the passionate love, but the old, pure brotherly affection. He had never been pained so bitterly as when he heard the first report of Fanny's death—never so gladdened as

when told that there was hope of her recovery.

"I will find Mr. Falkland," he said later in the evening, "see him, and make him listen to me. If he has a heart to be moved, the story of what has happened will move it."

CHAPTER LIX.

HOPE.

PERCY, living in retirement at the Caswell curacy, would have found peace had he not been so haunted by remorse. He had not told the Reverend Mr. Wilson the secret of his sorrow yet, but he longed to do so.

The reverend gentleman let him bide his time. He saw there was something on Percy's mind, and he waited for him to speak out the burden. He knew that it must come, and so it did.

He found his guest subdued in spirit, refined and scholarly in tone, though some traces of the life he had led still hung about him. He had the wish to believe in the good rather than the belief itself within him. He had been too long a doubter, tutored by doubters, to become a convert suddenly.

But he fell into the hands of a good and patient teacher—one who had witnessed too many struggles of the soul against perverted reason to despair because the old leaven was hard to eradicate. He let the surrounding influences do their work; he let Percy's own sense tell him by comparison which was the better way.

And it worked. Percy had long solitary rambles in the woods of Westmoreland; and the best teacher man can have—the inner consciousness—told him how false and hollow the old life had been. If he was not turned from it altogether, he was, at least, grateful for the change.

He told his sad and sinful story to the reverend gentleman one evening when he met the minister while returning from a ramble and a reverie. Mr. Wilson could not have arrived at a better moment, for Percy had been thinking deeply, and the whole past was before him, ready to rise to his tongue at a word.

The reverend gentleman looked at him, and could not help thinking how much the expression of his face had changed for the better, though he had not been at Caswell many days. The deep lines printed in dissipation were fading out, and the handsome features had much of the repose that had so charmed Fanny in their early love days.

"Well, Mr. Falkland," said the minister, "thoughtful still?"

"I have been thinking—dreaming, perhaps."

"Of the past, then. Our waking dreams are always before our memories."

"Mine were memories," sighed Percy. "I have few hopes now."

"That is wrong."

"You would not say so if you knew the truth. It does not make the truth less hard that I have been the breaker of the hopes I might have realised."

The minister went homewards with him; drifts of cloud were sinking in the evening sky, and the soft, perceptible twilight, seen only in the country, was settling down. It was the very hour for sympathetic communion.

"It is a beautiful time, this," said Percy. "I never dreamed there was so much peace anywhere."

"You like our home?"

"I have been happier than I can remember. I came here, broken in spirit, haunted by remorse; sorry for a wrong that recoiled upon myself. Two days, Mr. Wilson, only two days before you saw me, I had seen the dead face of the poor girl whom I loved—and killed."

"Killed!" said Mr. Wilson, with an involuntary shudder. "Surely not—"

"Just as surely as if I had stabbed or poisoned her," said Percy, bitterly. "I drove her to despair, and she drowned herself—poor girl

poor Fanny! I saw her lying on the stones with her white face upturned to the stars, as if she were asking Heaven why the man whose bit or cruelty had slain her walked the earth unpunished; and Heaven heard the mute prayer, for I am punished now."

"What was this girl to you?" asked the minister.

"My wife—the mother of my child. When I looked back I do not seem to know myself in the man who was ill-used her; but I doubted and deserted her, Mr. Wilson. I did not doubt her without cause, though I know now that she was innocent."

"Tell me the whole story."

"I will."

And he did from the commencement. When he met Fanny at the yard, where she had gone with her father's dinner: he told the whole simple truth, concealing nothing.

"I had led a wild life," he said, "and when I saw her there—the daughter of my father's workman—a beautiful girl, proud beyond her station, fond of dress—therefore vain, and therefore easily flattered—my thoughts were not the purest, my intention not the best; but I found her true-hearted as a vestal—a work-girl with the soul of a lady.

"I married her," he went on, "for her goodness turned my passion into respectful love. I took her away from home, and we were very happy for a time. Would to Heaven there had never been a change!"

"How came the change?" asked Mr. Wilson, after a slight pause.

"I had to go to Germany to take charge of a railway contract, and as we were married in secret I dared not take her with me. That was the great cause, the fault of my cowardice. I never should have lost her had I been brave at the outset."

"Secrecy is a heavy sin in such a solemn compact as wedlock," said the minister. "There was never an elopement or a secret marriage yet that did not cause much misery."

"And I had no reason to be afraid," said Percy, "for I stood well in my profession, and could have worked for her; but my father threatened to disinherit me if I married beneath me, and I feared he might keep his word."

"It was a bad fear."

"The fear of a coward," said Percy, in self-condemnation, "and we were parted through it. I went away, and my father—Heaven forgive him!—set a spy upon me, who intercepted our correspondence; and the fair girl, who was so true to me, was absolutely in want, working for herself and our child—never repining—never complaining, but bearing her troubles and her secret bravely; loving on—keeping faith."

"And how long did this last?"

"For many months; and then I wrote at last to tell of my intended return. She had been in Holloway with a lady of your name, who cared for her well and kindly. Our child was born there, in Paxton-street."

"Surely, then," said the Reverend Mr. Wilson, "it must be my poor brother's wife."

"It did not strike me, as the name is not uncommon."

"The widow of a physician. And she has a son, Arthur, chief clerk in a City bank."

"It must be the same. And that son, Arthur Wilson, is the cause of all my misery."

"Impossible!" said the reverend gentleman, gravely. "There is no man I know so capable of a pure friendship, a chivalric devotion, as my nephew Arthur. He never wronged a woman in his life—never caused one of his mother's sex to shed a tear of shame."

"I believe it now," said Percy, "but I did not then. In my fierce jealousy I doubted everything; I cast her off, disowned her, and plunged into a mad career of vicious dissipation. I even went so far as to pay court to another lady, believing that my wife would keep the secret of our marriage, as she did, and I persuaded the lady to elope with me,

but your nephew stepped in here, and saved her from me. I thank him for it now."

"But how came it that you doubted her through Arthur?"

"Ah, Mr. Wilson! you would have doubted too had the case been yours. I hurried home, travelling night and day—so intense was my longing to see my darling and kiss our child—and I reached her lodgings a day before she expected, and she was out with your nephew. I heard them come home together, and he kissed her when they parted."

"Did he know she was your wife?"

"No."

"Then what a fabric of misery you have built on the simple fact of a kiss. Why did you not have an explanation?"

"I could not; my fury was too great. I left her in a tempest of jealous rage, and swore to never look upon her again, and I did not, till I saw her lying dead upon the stones."

"Are you quite sure she was dead?" asked Mr. Wilson, deeply moved by the other's emotion. "Did you stay to ascertain if means were used to restore life?"

"No; I went on. I was brutalized by drink, and could feel no pity then; but in the morning reflection came, and all the horrors fell upon me. I shall never forget the look of the honest fellow who had tried to save her. 'Quite dead, poor thing!' he said to me. 'She struck her head when she went in, and the first plunge did the rest,' and that was how I heard she died."

"To my mind it is no proof," said Mr. Wilson. "Persons supposed to be drowned have been restored long after life was supposed to have departed. Did you make any inquiries?"

"None. I feared to meet the hopeless answer over and over again."

"Have courage," said the minister, with his quiet hand on Percy's arm; "have strength, faith, and patience. I will send to London, and learn the whole truth. Should it be as you think, let my silence tell it; should it be otherwise, you shall know it soon."

Percy shook his head.

"There is no such happiness in store for me. I must bear the misery I have deserved."

The Reverend Mr. Wilson wrote to his relatives in Paxton-street to tell them of his singular meeting with Mr. Falkland, and ask Arthur to make inquiries concerning the lost wife.

"It was strange that he should come to me," said the clergyman, in his letter. "And I never saw a man so conscience-stricken, so sincerely penitent. It would, indeed, be a mercy if the poor girl could be restored to him!"

"And there is a faint hope that she may not be dead. He did not, it appears, stay to ascertain whether it was so or not. You can learn the truth, and let me know. I would give much to hear good news. There was never a man so changed, so thoroughly redeemed by suffering."

"He has told me the whole story, omitting nothing, and I see by what an unfortunate misconception the sad estrangement began. It is a good token that he does not say a word in reproach of Arthur now. He takes the blame entirely to himself."

This, and much more, he wrote; and just at the time the letter reached Paxton-street Mrs. Wilson was writing to him to inform him of her purpose to visit him in company with a young lady friend. She showed Arthur his uncle's letter.

"It is singular that he should have gone there of all places in the world," said Arthur, with a smile. "He could not have gone to a better. What shall we tell him, mother?"

"Nothing yet," said the widow, gravely. "Frances, though at home, is by no means out of danger. She is very weak—her nervous system shattered—her strength exhausted. She could not bear a disappointment."

"A disappointment! Surely you believe in Falkland's sincerity?"

"At present. But, my son, we have to see how it will last. There is a reaction just now—a quiet sorrow, the consequence of strong, remorseful horror; and he is under good influences. He feels, while the thought is hopeless, that it would be a mercy in Heaven to restore Fanny to him. Whether he would have the same feeling if she were restored is a different matter."

"Oh, mother, how you doubt mankind."

"Not so, Arthur. I believe that the worst may be redeemed, but lasting redemption is not of sudden growth. I never accept, act upon, or care to remember, anything said in moments of emotion, in pain or passion, suffering or joy. I accept only what is spoken in the calm and sober moments of reflection. Mr. Falkland has not had time for reflection yet."

"But see what uncle says."

"Your uncle is a minister of the Gospel, and it is his duty to believe. He accepts Mr. Falkland without any previous knowledge of his character; he has only heard the story told with the pathos of a man in pain; had he heard the same story from another it would have made a different impression."

Arthur, in the impulse of his generous nature, would have written off at once to tell Percy that Fanny still lived, but Mrs. Wilson stayed him.

"Before Frances hears a word that there is any hope of a re-union," she said, "Mr. Falkland must be put thoroughly to the test; there must not be the shadow of a doubt as to our poor darling's future."

"How can it be done?"

"Mr. West told you of an arrangement made for his family by the elder Mr. Falkland?"

"Yes. The old gentleman has behaved very well, after his kind."

"It is evident to me that the arrangement was made while Mr. Falkland senior was sure that our Frances was dead—and he is still under that impression. Whether or not, Mr. West has the money placed in full to his credit at the London and Colonial Bank, as you, I daresay, are aware."

"I am."

"Mr. West, whose simple honesty of mind does not grasp too many ideas at once, is under the impression that the money was given to him for the express purpose of taking Frances and the whole family out of the country, and he is now making preparations so to do."

"Yes," sighed Arthur. "Mr. West is very communicative, and he told me all about it."

Though Arthur was happy in the possession of Adelaide's love he did not like to lose Frances entirely. She was, and always would be, a dear friend—a dear sister to him.

"Well, then, we can test him this way," said Mrs. Wilson; "after a time—say a week—during which we are supposed to be making inquiries, you shall go down and see Mr. Percy. His reception of you will show you, to a certain extent, whether his belief in Fanny's innocence—his forgiveness of her is thorough and entire. Should you find that it is, you may tell him what is in effect the truth—that Frances lives and having given up all hope of winning back his love, is going out with her family to the Colonies."

"Your way is best, mother. I see your meaning now. Leave him to act for himself then."

"Let us see whether his repentance will give him courage to brave his father's anger, acknowledge Frances as his wife, and work for her. If he does that, his repentance is sincere, and he deserves the happiness he will have."

"It is wise," said Arthur. "But the poor fellow will be in suspense a whole week."

"He fed the furnace, Arthur—he made the crucible. Let him be tried in it. His repentance, if sincere, will make him the purer man for waiting. Those who have sinned long should suffer deeply."

"And he has suffered, mother; so has Frances."

"The better for them both," was the grave

response. "It was the natural result of a stolen marriage, and the long course of desecration that followed. The step was ill-advised in the first place—selfish in the next. They thought only of themselves; paid no regard to their parents. We cannot do these things, Arthur, and hope to escape punishment."

"You judge Frances so severely, and you were so kind to her."

"The severity is justice—the kindness, pity and affection. If you, my son, were to do wrong, I should blame you, but I should love you all the same."

(To be continued.)

PUT TO THE PROOF.

CHAPTER I.

"My dear Beryl, your news delights one; truly you are a wonderful woman. The way you surmount all difficulties by sheer power of will amazes me. There is cause enough, I know, to make you try to rise to your proper level, but the risk you run would daunt a less courageous woman."

The speaker, a tall, soldierly-looking man of fifty, put his hands familiarly upon the graceful shoulders of the lady who stood before him. She was a superb woman, twelve years his junior, who had paused a second in her impatient walk to look at him; her golden brown eyes, and ruddy gold hair catching the spring sunshine as it crept, like an uninvited guest, through the painted windows of the most picturesque room of Lexton Priory.

"You and I have been good friends always, Rex, and I have to thank you for many favours; but for none more profoundly than procuring an invitation to this grand old house."

"My dear Beryl, I thought it a pity that the Lord of Lexton should forget the only woman for whom I have heard him express serious admiration. What will you do if he proposes?"

"Accept him! I should be an idiot to refuse fortune's favours."

"But what will you do about Percy?"

"Ignore him, as though he had never lived!"

"Yet you love him!"

"Better than all the world beside; but what's the use of my love now I can do so little to help him."

"Can you manage Vashti?"

"I ought to know how to manage my own child!"

"Yes! but I cannot believe Vashti would lend herself to deception."

"Still I can trust her."

"When did you hear of Percy last?"

"Months ago; he had enlisted and gone to the East."

"What name did he take?"

"I don't know; he spared me all details. He loves me too well to make me share his disgrace."

"He ought to come to a noble manhood, he has the making of a hero."

"Thank you, Rex; you were always just to him."

"How, in Heaven's name, Beryl, did you manage to come out such a swell upon twenty pounds?"

"Oh! Vashti is a clever needlewoman; and I have a real talent for spending money. This dress, now, cost just ten shillings."

She glanced down complacently at the heavy folds of coarse, white serge, that boasted no other trimming than some heavy white braid, and a knot or two of deep crimson velvet. It was plainly and artistically made; few women could have borne its severe simplicity, but it suited her regal form to perfection, each fold falling heavily about her in statuesque grace, that made her a fit model for a painter.

She looked like Guinevere, her full lips and heavy, dreamy eyelids suited so well with the indolent grace of her carriage.

Major Paget looked at her admiringly. Years

ago he had loved and longed for her with the best love of his heart; but they had both been too poor to marry, and she, but a girl of sixteen, was worldly-wise enough to look to the main chance, and marry money. She enjoyed but a few years of prosperity though, for when her girlchild was born her husband died bankrupt. He had been a great city merchant, and the poor, proud daughter of a noble house.

Since then she had endured a hard struggle to keep up appearances, and a year before our story opens she had sustained a terrible trial.

When things are at their worst they are bound to mend, is an old saying; seesaw is fortune's law; first up then down, is the fate of most of us. Beryl Paget had been no exception to the rule; she had known the ups-and-downs of life, keeping an undaunted spirit, and a fixed resolve to rise above her surroundings.

Rex took a bunch of snowdrops and violets from a vase, and fixed them at his cousin's throat, which, like Annie Laurie's, "was like the swan's, and her face it was the fairest that e'er the sun shone on." And, like Cleopatra, age could not wither her; perfect health seemed to endow her with perpetual youth.

While they stood thus together, the crimson portière before the door was quietly drawn back, and a gentleman looked upon the charming scene. He was a man of perhaps sixty; a huge noble-looking fellow, with thick hair, white as snow, and a heavy, drooping moustache of the same hue; his eyes were blue and bright as a babe's, his cheeks ruddy as winter apples, and, altogether, he had a noble distinguished look.

"Mrs. Paget, you promised to ride with me, and here I find you idling away the sunny hours with this gossiping cousin of yours."

Mrs. Paget turned with a smile, and pointing to a quaint time-piece, said archly: "You impatient man, 'tis an hour to the time appointed. I can dress in a quarter or twenty minutes; and 'tis so cosy here by the fire."

She took a fire-screen of peacock's feathers from the high mantel-shelf, and, putting a dainty slippers foot on the marble fender, looked into the glowing fire.

Lord Lexton took in the artistic pose of the splendid figure, the regal beauty of the proud head, and thought her a queen among women. Rex saw the look and smiled; it told him so plainly the state of his old friend's affection.

Saying he had some letters to write, Rex left them; and, finding they were alone, Mrs. Paget said, with a slight, slow smile,—

"I suppose I had better go too; I do not want to keep you waiting."

"Don't go yet, Mrs. Paget. Why do you always avoid me?"

"What utter nonsense! When do I avoid you?"

"Often. Now I want to know the reason. If it is that my society is distasteful you have but to say so, and I will cease to trouble you."

Mrs. Paget dropped the screen, and facing him, with a slight flush on her fair face, said, hurriedly,—

"You know it is not that your society is distasteful. The truth is, I have heard our names coupled together unpleasantly; in fact, have heard myself termed a scheming woman, who came here to make market of her beauty, knowing you to be a great catch. I think I had better return to my own humble little home; there, at least, I am not misjudged, if I dare snatch the pleasure of the hour to enliven the dull routine of my life. When you entered I was telling Rex it was a pity he had not left me to my own level dull existence. To come into the society I was accustomed to so long ago only unsettles and makes me discontented."

Lord Lexton's fine old face flushed hotly. Taking her soft hand in his, he said, impulsively,—

"Why notice the ill-natured chatter of an envious crowd? My dear girl, men here are mad about you, and therefore the women are naturally jealous. You must not be driven away by such silly notions. What would the

house be without you? I'm afraid you will think me an old fool, Beryl, but I love you; I can't live without you. Life will not be too long for love with us; let us spend it together. Be my wife, and if the whole devotion of a loyal heart can content you, you will be happy as my wife!"

These were the very words Beryl had been longing to hear; yet she was too wise to show the exultation they caused her, and said,—

"Thanks for your kind words and kinder wishes. Your noble nature misleads you; 'tis not love you feel, but a generous compassion that would make old shield me even with your name. No, dear old friend, I do not quite deserve the opinion of our friends; but I confess your offer has consoled me for much they have made me suffer. I must refuse you, Lord Lexton; I am but a penniless widow past her first youth, burdened with a portionless daughter. You might repent marrying me; and that would be the bitterest pang fortune could inflict upon me."

Lord Lexton took her hand tenderly, and pressed it between both his own, and said, regretfully,—

"My dear, I have been mad to hope you could get to care for me. It has been a delicious dream that I have indulged in. Forgive my presumption; I shall love you as long as I live, ab! and in spite of your refusal, hope on till you put another in the only position in life I covet."

"You know I shall never do that; but after the scandal ill-natured tongues have raised about us, I could not accept you if I would; and I would not, for fear, as I said before, that you might repent."

"My darling, I should never do that; I love you too sincerely. Do not say any more; you have pained me enough. Run away and get into your habit. You have yet to learn that an old man's love burneth to the bone. I shall not give up all hope of winning you. As to your poverty, what is that to me!"

Mrs. Paget, with one of her rare sweet smiles, that seemed to linger longest in her eyes, only looked at the timepiece, and hastened away, saying if he detained her the horses would be kept waiting.

CHAPTER II.

The woods round Lexton were wonderful to behold in the constantly-changing April weather.

Bonny blue-bells and tender green moss covered the earth that two months before was bare and brown; purple and white violets vied with the pale primrose.

The trees budded out bravely, and the bracken banks were already in their first grace of life. The breeze was laden with the sweet scents of new blossoming earth.

Nothing is more exhilarating than a canter through the woods in spring time. Mrs. Paget rode ahead with Lord Lexton and her cousin, Major Paget. Her cheeks flushed, her eyes bright with exultant life.

She looked splendid on horseback, and was fully aware of the fact; her figure was simply perfect, and she rode with the free grace of an Indian huntress.

"April smiles and April tears,
Welcome them together;
Clouds and sunshine, hopes and fears,
Make up April weather."

sang Lord Lexton, in a lusty voice; and the merry party behind caught up the refrain, and made the woods ring, while the horses' hoofs made no sound on the short, springy turf.

Rex wondered what had given Beryl such a joyous look; and Lord Lexton sighed, for he fancied it showed she was heart whole, while he was yearning for responsive love.

"This capricious cousin of yours talks of breaking up our pleasant party by leaving us."

Rex turned in surprise to Mrs. Paget, and said, "Nonsense, Beryl, you cannot mean it; there is nothing to take you home now, I'm sure!"

Beryl smiled, and said, lightly, "How do you

know what appointments I have made? I really must go soon."

A lady of fashion rode near and caught Beryl's words; with a meaning smile she turned to her friend, Lady Lovelace, and said: "Did you hear that? What can take the lovely widow away from her prey?"

Lady Lovelace replied that, like Joey B—, Mrs. Paget was "sly, devilish sly."

After luncheon that day Rex challenged Mrs. Paget to a game of billiards, and so the ladies were left to fancy-work and gossip. Lady Lovelace, who had three marriageable daughters—though she still was a young-looking and handsome woman—was the most bitter against the charming widow, who engaged all the attention of their host and the other gentlemen.

When they had called her every conceivable thing but a good woman, Lady Lovelace said, as she matched a delicate shade of crewels by the open window that looked out on a balcony, "Take my word for it, Mrs. Paget would not leave if she did not believe her game played out. She sat herself to catch Lord Lexton, and does not like to show her defeat, so takes refuge in flight. She's as poor as Job, and has an almost grown-up daughter. I heard she had been angling for the Rector of Balmfield, who happens to be my own cousin. I suppose she finds she has taken too high a flight, and has neglected the only game she is likely to catch."

A shadow fell upon her; she looked up in dire confusion to see her host with stormy eyes standing before her. His voice shook a little as he said,—

"Ladies, permit me to apologise for overhearing your entertaining conversation, and allow me to correct a slight error. Mrs. Paget is leaving here, not because her game is played out, but because, being a sensitive, high-minded lady, she does not like to inflict useless pain upon one who loves her. I proposed to the lady, and she kindly, but firmly refused me. My love alone drives her from the house her presence honours. Some day I shall try my luck again; can you find it in your hearts to wish me success?"

A dead silence followed this speech. Lady Lovelace positively trembled. The situation was, to say the least of it, unpleasant in the extreme; but she was equal to the emergency; she rallied, and said, bravely,—

"All of us are liable to misconstruction. My liking for you may have made me unjust, which I bitterly regret now. I, at least, can wish you good speed, and I am sure our friends here are with me, wishing you every happiness in life."

A murmur of assent went round, and Lord Lexton, with a slight smile, bowed and left them, his heart hot with resentment against the woman who would defame his darling.

Far away from this grand old priory, which stood in the centre of England's garden, Kent, in a bleak county where wind-swept heaths and grassy plains made the beautifully-featured face of Great Britain look plain, stood a small, massively-built building, called the "Warren;" it had been the dower-house of the Pagets for years past. The family seat of their poor, proud family was at some distance on a frowning cliff that overlooked the sea, and was called "Paget Naze." Its present owner, Rex Paget, held it secretly in trust; all the vast fortune that had once endowed the place had dwindled down to a few paltry hundreds a year; and people who knew Rex Paget's very modest way of living wondered how he spent even so narrow an income. He had the reputation of being a miser, and his brother officers nicknamed him "Save All;" but this did not annoy Rex, he rather encouraged the belief that he had money.

Why he had never married perplexed many; but if the question was put to his cousin, Mrs. Paget, she would smile and say he thought he could not afford to marry.

Next to being rich the reputation of wealth is valuable. So Rex Paget found it, and thanked his lucky stars people could not peep

into the family closet and see the quaint figure of poverty that was his skeleton.

To return to the Warren, we must cross the windy heath, with its bloom of purple and gold and grand air of solitude, and, in passing, we come across the figure of a girl—a lonely figure, poorly clad, but with an air of refinement and good breeding about her. The sun, sinking into a ruddy bed of clouds, reflected a warm light on her upturned face; she was sitting on a milestone, thinking profoundly. At her feet a noble St. Bernard, whose huge head rested against her knees.

The girl was not beautiful; there were those who went so far as to call her a plain, red-headed girl, but these were such as had not the gift of reading between the lines, or diving below the surface. They did not see the promise of glorious womanhood shadowed so fairly in her pale face, with its great haunting eyes of clear grey—eyes that were as full of promise as a sky at dawn, and spoke of a pure exalted soul, and a heart free from all shadow of evil.

Her face was a perfect oval, with full, sensitive lips, dark lashes and brows; a square, firm chin, and a forehead that spoke of brain power. Her hair, which the uncharitable called red, was of richest chestnut, flashing here and there to red gold; it waved low upon her white forehead, and was gathered in an untidy knot behind. Luxuriant as her hair was, it could not hide the classic shape of her head, or the full, white fairness of her throat. Rox Paget said she had the head of Clytie.

Her figure, as yet not come to full development, was full of grace and elegance; not even her shabby homespun dress would hide its charm. In her hand she held a plain, speckled sailor hat, taken off that the pleasant breeze might cool her forehead, that was burning and aching wretchedly.

The solitude pleased Vashti, for there no eyes could read the restless longing of her soul for change. She was hugely discontented with the level line of dull domestic duty that made up her life, and found herself uselessly envying her beautiful mother, for whom she had toiled to make her grand enough for her visit to Lexington Priory. Her fingers were sore with stitching, her brain weary of planning.

She had time to rest now truly, but with the opportunity the desire for rest and quiet vanished, and instead came the eager longing to be up and doing, with a heart for any fate.

The violets (sweet, wild, white wood-violets they were) at her throat breathed of hope and renewed life; life with her, as with the year, was at spring time. She longed to take part in the great struggle of existence; she hated the mere vegetation she now endured, she was tired of the everlasting hills that showed beyond the rugged stretch of heath—hills she had looked upon since childhood and saw no change except of sun and snow, the moods of nature, not of life.

She wanted to see the world beyond the hills that frowned upon her home; she longed, like all young natures whose lives are empty, for some change from the dull routine; longed, but in vain, and her heart grew hot and restless with its fever of discontent.

She had no friends of her own age—the poverty at the Warren prevented friendship with their equals, and as their only servant, Peggy, tersely put it, "It wasn't to be expected the likes of them would stoop to pick up nothing."

Very proud were the Pagets, both mother and daughter, and very ambitious too.

Grand plans floated through Vashti's mind—plans that would never come to fruition.

Vashti felt this even while she dreamed over them.

While the girl sat lost in thought the sun sank, and the grey of the evening shrouded hills and heath like a nun's veil.

A lonely shepherd wended his weary way in the distance with his flocks before him; a gipsy woman in a red cloak came slowly on through the twilight—a hag, bowed and bent with age, with evil-gleaming black eyes, and thin grey

curls that blew into her eyes and over her sallow, shrunken cheeks.

The St. Bernard, Rebel, had run away after something he supposed to be a rabbit, and so Vashti sat alone when the old woman neared her; the hag paused, and said in a crooning voice,—

"Am I far from Balmfield, dearie?"

"About a mile and a half," said Vashti, in her high-bred voice. "See, you can discern the lights in the distance!"

As Vashti spoke she pointed with her slim, bare hand to the village; the waning light caught the gleam of an old-fashioned ring set in small brilliants.

The gipsy's covetous eyes caught the flash of the jewel, and drawing nearer she said,—

"Let me tell your fortune, pretty lady."

Vashti shook her head, and smiled as she answered,—

"I have no faith in the promises you pretend to believe fate fastens in the palm. Why, your folk even own there can be no spell except the hand be lined with silver or gold! Jog on, old lady, do not waste time on an unbeliever like me."

The gipsy caught her hand and said,—

"Ah! here is gold, the god of the world! Take off the ring, dearie, and cross your hand with it; you have a fortune in your face; let me read it for you."

Vashti tried to snatch her hand away, but the crone's skinny fingers held it fast, cleverly slipping the ring, which was loose, off the slender finger in the struggle.

"Loose my hand—how dare you!—and give me my ring. Would you rob me, you old sinner?"

"No, my pretty. I am honest as the day. I've not got the ring; it must have dropped off on the short grass; let's look for it."

"You have the ring; restore it to me or I will drag you to the village and put you in gaol."

Vashti, in hot anger, shook the old woman vigorously, and in a second the woman's bony claws were clutching at her throat.

Vashti struggled to free herself, when suddenly there was a tearing through the brushwood, and Rebel flew upon the woman and dragged her down.

Vashti with horror tried to pull him off, twisting his collar with her trembling hands.

She could not get him to release his prey, and a shrill cry of terror broke from her white lips.

The soft wind carried the cry to the ears of a gentleman, who, gun in hand and dog at heels, was trying to make his way straight to the village.

Hastening in the direction from whence the sound proceeded he came upon the scene, took in the situation in a glance, and compelled the brute to release his hold.

Vashti held Rebel's collar, and tried to thank the stranger.

The old woman, faint with fright, lay like one dead; the gentleman knelt beside her, and poured the remains of a flask of wine between her toothless gums, Vashti looking on with alarm.

When the woman opened her eyes, she said, in a whining voice,—

"I have been misused, bitterly misused. I am old and honest."

Vashti briefly related what had passed, and the gentleman told the crone she must find and restore the ring, or go to prison till she could prove it had never been in her possession.

After much bluster and pretended searching the woman made believe to pick it up, and tossed it to Vashti, saying in bitter rage,—

"You have misjudged me, and so surely shall you be for ever misjudged. Those you most love shall believe you false as Satan! Ah! you shall suffer pang sharper than the teeth of a hound can inflict. Your heart shall bleed, ah! bleed in vain, and healing shall not come to the wound that shall be unsuspected by the world. My curse upon

you, woman, with a heart of stone and the face of a Madonna!"

"Silence!" said the gentleman, sternly, seeing Vashti shivered; and the old woman, awed by his commanding tone went away, muttering curses as she went.

With an amused smile the gentleman turned to Vashti and said: "A pleasant old party that. What has she done with her broomstick I wonder? Did she frighten you?"

"I am ashamed to confess she did, but I think Rebel punished her pretty considerably. I am so grateful to you for coming to the rescue; I was afraid Rebel would kill her."

"He's a splendid brute, and makes a good guardian; yet I wonder you come to this desolate spot alone!"

"It's the most pleasant walk about here; and I have never been annoyed before. We rarely meet tramps in this place."

"Which is, I should imagine, a cause for thanksgiving, if tramps usually resemble that horrid, wicked old witch. What a quaint-looking ring an heirloom, I suppose?"

"Yes, it was my father's."

Vashti showed the ring, which was shaped like a shield. Gold letters on black enamel formed the word "Spa."

"Is that your motto?" asked the gentleman. Vashti smiled brightly, and answered that it was.

Night was advancing swiftly upon them, and Vashti hastened on homeward accompanied by the stranger, who had much to say about the scenery and other ordinary topics, and Vashti felt entertained; it was so rarely she got a chat with a cultivated person. When they got into the high road she held out her hand, and said frankly, "Thank you for helping me, and good-bye; my path is up a lane close by—yours, I believe, to the village."

The gentleman held her hand a second, and said, "I'm glad I have been of even such slight service to you. May I ask your name?" "My name is Vashti Page."

"And mine, Mark Frost. I hope we shall meet again!"

"Perhaps, we may," answered Vashti. "The world is like a maze; one is constantly coming across the same turning. Good-night!"

"Good-night, don't dream of witches!"

Vashti hastened on, and was quickly lost to sight. Then, turning to his dog, Mark Frost strode away in the gathering gloom, his thoughts full of Vashti's unusual look and manner. He decided she was a girl worth knowing, and out of the usual run.

CHAPTER LIL

The next day was Sunday, and in hopes of meeting her Mark went to the village church. He was early, so he installed himself in a seat where he could watch the people enter.

It was a beautiful morning. The earth, freshened by early showers, was sparkling with rain-drops that hung on every blade of grass, and glistened like gems in the tender, green shoots of the trees.

Vashti came in, her cool, pale face fresh and fair as the big bunch of lilies-of-the-valley that nestled beneath her decided little chin.

Mark had admired her when she was dull and despondent, and shabbily attired in one of her mother's cast-off dresses; but he was pleasantly surprised to see the improvement a well-fitting, tasteful costume made in her.

Vashti was always scrupulously neat. Her mother would sneer at her querulous taste sometimes, when the perfection of her own splendid beauty made Vashti look plain by contrast.

Mark watched her as she seated herself among the crowd of village-girls that made the choir; and when her clear voice led the rest with notes high-soaring and sweet as a lark's, he felt his heart uplifted with a strange, new pleasure. The service was very tame, he thought, but for the singing, that recompensed him for all else.

At the close of the service Mark waited in the porch to shake hands with the rector's

plain, but jolly daughter, Barbara Rouse. While they stood chatting Vashti came up, and Barbara, who was fond of her, stopped her, and was about to introduce Mark, when, with his pleasant smile, he took Vashti's hand, and told Miss Rouse he had met her friend before. Bab said he was meant to keep secrets from his friends. And they walked together through God's acre, the spring sunbeams turning Vashti's hair to gold, lighting up the pearly whiteness of her skin and the clear depths of her true eyes—eyes that mirrored a pure soul.

"Will you come home to dinner, Vashti? it must be so dull for you alone. We always, as you know, dine early to-day, because of the servants attending evening service. I explained this to Mr. Frost, and it did not scare him from accepting papa's invitation; don't be less obliging, there's a dear."

Vashti hesitated a moment. She was always glad to go to the rectory; but Mark's eager eyes, as he waited to hear her reply, checked, she knew not why, her ready acceptance. Then came the thought of how dull it would be at the Warren, and her solitary meal of cold meat, and she sensible chose the more pleasant part, and allowed Bab to take her home in triumph.

When the two girls went to remove their bonnets Vashti asked who Mark Frost was. Bab brushed her dark hair back from her broad forehead as she said, softly,

"Mark Frost is a fine fellow. Years ago he came here to read with papa—it was the year my dear mother died—and Mark helped us to bear our trouble. He is heir-at-law to the rich Lord Lexington, and is by profession a barrister. He is a man of culture, a bit of an artist, and writes a little for the quarters. I am sure you will like him. He is staying at the West Farm; he is often there. He likes this part, and runs down for the fishing and shooting. Come, dear, there's the dinner-bell, I must not keep the dad waiting."

Vashti followed her friend into the grand old dining-room. The rectory was famous for its carvings and antique furniture, and Barbara managed to keep up the place in artistic perfection. Mark was seated in one of the window seats, admiring a fine show of crocuses, that made patches of bright colour about the lawn.

"I see you have hung out your hammocks, Bab. Surely 'tis not warm enough to indulge in them yet?"

"Not quite, perhaps, but it soon will be; and it looks promising to see them: they recall sunny days."

Bab took the head of the table, with a smile to the kind old face of her father, whom Mrs. Paget, quoting crossly, had once called "a little round, fat, oily man of God."

Mr. Rouse was glad to see Vashti, he liked her; and, in speaking of her to Mark, said,—

"She is a really good girl, with no nonsense about her. You must have met her mother in society; she is a superb creature of the world—worldly, but not bad. A little vain, perhaps, but her extreme beauty is to blame for that. They are poor and proud—two uncomfortable things for them, but they do not trouble their friends with either their pride or poverty."

Mark thought of the rector's words as he chatted to Vashti, and in his heart he pitied the girl, who seemed so lonely, and was glad good, plain Barbara called her her friend. After that first Sabbath spent together Mark and Vashti became great friends, and it became quite habitual for them to be together, walking over the heath, or riding in Bab's little pony-trap. This companionship, that seemed so calm and commonplace a thing, began to be in secret—a dangerously precious happiness to both. They were content to enjoy the present; neither dared look beyond to that uncertain, chequered future that somehow both dreaded.

There had been no word of love spoken yet; no caress had shown the hidden passion of their hearts, but they felt that nameless attraction, that secret sympathy, that make unacknowledged love so dear a tie. They were under the spell that charms rich and poor,

gentle and simple alike, and so they were happy; they had faith and unquestioning trust in each other, and were blessed in believing each true to the other.

April turned itself into May, the hawthorn was in bloom with what are prettily termed May pearls; swallows had returned to gladden the earth with music, the thrush was in full song. Mark had met Vashti one day in the meadow land at the back of the Warren; her hands were full of may, white and red, and, besides this, a pretty spray of that azure-hued flower called speedwell.

Mark took her hands, flowers and all, in his, and said, softly, "Vashti, I was on my way to the Warren to say good-bye."

Vashti's eyes drooped and her lips quivered; she knew this farewell must come, but it seemed not too soon. Mark saw her troubled look, and said,

"I go to town by the midday train. Can you tell me from the depths of your heart that you want me to come back?"

"Yes, truly I can! We have been such real friends I shall miss you, for mine is an empty life."

Vashti tried to speak calmly, but she was glad to have her hand free to hide the uncontrollable quiver of her lips behind the flowers.

"Vashti, the little while that I have known you has been the happiest of my life. I, too, have been lonely; but I shall never be so again, for I have known you, and shall remember while I have life my heart can never be empty again. Love for you is there to fill it to completeness."

A lovely blush glorified the girl's face, as, compelled by the impassioned regard of him, her eyes were uplifted.

"You do care for me, Vashti?"

"I do, indeed, Mark—care more than I can say."

"And trust me?"

"My faith shall never fail."

"Then we shall be happy some day, sweet heart!"

Mark drew her to him and pressed his first love kiss on her pure lips—lips that never before had felt love's impress. A great rapturous happiness filled their hearts that would have power to gladden all their after-time.

The hay-fields were swept by the soft breeze that made them bend like green waves; birds sang, and the sun shone brightly as the lovers in honest, pure affection, clasped hands at parting—their first parting—and brief though they believed it would be, it had power to blanch their cheeks with pain. In silence so entire that they could hear the tempestuous beating of her hearts, they stood together looking into each other's eyes, and reading there the light of love and truth.

"Am I the only man you have ever loved, Vashti—the only man who has kissed and held you as I now hold you?"

"You are the only man, Mark."

"Swear it."

"I swear it!"

"And I am the only one who ever shall be loved so by you?"

"You are. Oh, Mark! I am afraid you're jealous!"

"I am, dearest, and could not take a woman to wife whose heart had been shared by another. I must be all in all; I do not care for divided affection. If you were untrue to me I could kill you. Don't shiver, my own dear, true love; nothing save death shall part us, for our love is immortal. I must go now, dear; I will write to you. I shall come back when the June roses are in bloom. Give me that tiny flower; what is its name?"

"Speedwell! 'Tis a token of well-wishing. Heaven keep you, my own, and send you back to me soon!"

Then with a close hand-clasp and long yearning look into each other's eyes they parted; and as Vashti watched Mark's tall form passing swiftly through the long grass her eyes grew dim, and her heart sank heavily.

Love's pleasure had been hers, and Love's

pain was hers also, for she had said good-bye to her heart's dearest.

Mark turned at the stile and looked back.

Vashti waved her hand to him with a quick, sad smile. And so she seemed to photograph herself upon his mind—tall, slim shape, with white wind-tossed garments, a head of dusky gold, a white-souled woman with passion-pale face and hands full of spring blossoms.

The spray of blue speedwell she had given him he put in a plain gold locket that hung from his watchguard, and as he shut it out of sight he thought,

"I will keep that till my dear girl gives me her pictured face to put in its place."

After Mark left her the day seemed ended for Vashti; she had no heart to stay out in the sunshine without him, so she slowly retraced her way to the Warren, whose interior was dark and gloomy, with dull, shadowy rooms, heavy old-fashioned furniture, with shabby carpets and curtains.

The poverty of the place did not trouble Vashti; she was too well accustomed to it, and was not easily influenced by outward things.

Her mother, on the contrary, took her moods from her surroundings, and hated the tomb-like place, that she said had been built to bury the lives of those who had ceased to please their world.

Vashti entered the back of the house, and paused a second in the kitchen to put her flowers in water.

Peggy, who was making the place neat, stopped a moment to shake her duster and say,

"Your mamma has been asking for you, miss."

Vashti started at her words, and said,

"Has your mistress returned while I have been out, Peggy?"

"Yes, miss, came in quite cool and comfortable like, as if she had just returned from a stroll, and says sharply: 'Peggy, a cup of coffee and some eggs, quick; I'm starved!'"

"How very strange!" said Vashti.

"When isn't the missus strange, I wonder?"

"Hush! Peggy, you must not mind if mamma chooses to return without warning. This is her home, and she has the right to do as she pleases."

Seeing Peggy had put a tray ready to carry to the dining-room, Vashti set the little blue china bowl she held full of May-pears down upon it; and seeing this, Peggy said, with horror,—

"Throw that stuff away, Miss Vashti! It brings ill-luck into the house, to say nothing of sickness or sudden death!"

"Don't be absurd, Peggy; what harm can innocent, sweet-scented flowers like these bring anyone?"

"Well, do as you like, miss—as you always do—but please don't leave any of the evil things in my kitchen, or I shall burn them."

"I am sure you would not be so ungrateful to the Creator of the flowers as to destroy his handiwork! Where is mamma?"

"In the dining-room, miss. Don't take them flowers to her; keep your evil omens to yourself—missus has had bad luck enough."

"She has had good luck in having you in her home so long, Peggy."

"I've been glad to stay, miss; I've had happy home here."

Vashti smiled dreamily; she was thinking how very little made some people happy.

Carrying her despised nosegay in her hand she hastily mounted the stairs, and entered the dining-room.

A bright, wood fire burned in the grate. Mrs. Paget loved to see a fire, and would have one lighted on any pretence; now it was that the place looked dull.

Mrs. Paget was sitting in a lounge chair, dressed in a dark cloth travelling dress, the sombre plainness of which was relieved by the "Squire" collar and cuffs, fastened with pale, pink coral studs.

A bunch of Lantana were fastened in her breast, her face had a bright exultant look.



[STRANGELY MET.]

Vashti knelt on a hassock beside her, looking into her lovely face with great adoring eyes.

"I am so glad you have come back, darling. How lovely you look, so bright and bonny! You have been having a good time."

"I have, indeed; and oh! my pet! what is best? I can see a way out of this sleepy hollow, this wretched life of stagnant vegetation and pinching poverty. I have received an offer of marriage from Lord Lexton!"

"Oh! mamma, have you accepted it?"

"No, dear, not yet."

"Then, what is the way out of poverty, dear?"

"Marriage, of course. Don't be dense, darling!"

"Marriage with whom?"

"Lord Lexton. He does not imagine I mean to marry because I refused out of policy! I knew he would propose again, and I did not like him to think me quite so ripe as to be ready to drop into his mouth. No; men like to climb and struggle for their fruit; the farther it is from their reach the better they like it. Besides, I like him enough to want his esteem as well as love, and I should prefer that he, first of all, should realize the poverty that surrounds us. I want to let him learn my value by at once; I want to test his love, and if it proves the stuff I take it for, I shall be Lady Lexton before the fall of the leaf."

"Oh! mother, think of our secret! Can you confide that to him?"

Mrs. Paget's face darkened. With an impatient sigh, she said,—

"You know I cannot confide that to anyone; it means ruin. Try to be less painfully honest, child; remember there is such a thing as diplomacy. Don't spoil my hopes by pulling a long face. I should have thought, like me, you would have jumped at the chance of promotion. I, for one, am tired of riding at the tag-end of the train—tired of rubbing against the rif-raff of the world. I want to put my foot upon fortune, to find recompence for past trials in future pleasantness. No more duns

and poor dinners—no more weary fights with fortune. What would not any woman risk to win what I shall win? Think of it, Vashti!"

"I do think, dear; and see breakers ahead, unless you care enough about the man to confide in him fully. If he loves you surely he would overlook that one blot against us; surely he could forgive it, dear! Were I a man I could forgive anything in a wife but secrecy."

"Vashti, you have never mixed with the world. You cannot credit how pride rules the rich—pride of birth, pride of name, pride of caste; you are but a child in experience—a dear, honest, simple child; the world will teach you wisdom as it has me. I was romantic and sentimental once; weaknesses I have grown out of, with my girlish frots. Come! don't let me discuss the vexing question further. Let me tell you about the Priory, it is such a beautiful place. I shall enjoy showing you all the pet places; and I know you will like Lord Lexton, he is so noble and distinguished, and is so sweetly kind and jolly. Rex swears by him; I am sure he will be kind to you. By-the-bye, Rex cannot gain tidings of the *Eastern Star*, and I am wretchedly anxious."

"Poor mother!" said Vashti, putting her arms about her mother's waist, and resting her head against her shoulders fondly.

Mrs. Paget smoothed the pretty head, and said,—

"I don't think there is anything harder to bear than suspense; I feel so restless, and, putting policy aside, just now I am better at home. The gaiety of life at the Priory seemed to hurt me; it was so hard to keep a bright face and one's heart sinking within one for dread. If I were only certain Percy was safe I could rest content, but 'tis so bitterly bad to bear this looking for evil tidings. What have you in your hands, dear; something pricked me?"

"Only a spray of hawthorn blossom, dear; see, 'tis like pale coral, and there is a lovely lot in the bowl yonder."

"Oh! take them away, child, I cannot bear to see them; 'tis foolish, I know, but I can't help believing they bring bad luck. Your father put a bunch in his button-hole the day he was thrown from his horse and killed, and Percy gave me a lot the day he left home so full of life and promise. They are lovely flowers, dear, but recall terrible times to me. May is an unlucky month, I think. All my trouble came in May."

"Oh, you dear, foolish mother, fancy you being so superstitious! Here comes Peggy with your coffee; she will be delighted to hear you share her belief."

(To be continued.)

It is said that if the cutting of the great Manchester sea canal takes place, one of the principal landlords near Knutsford will be a gainer by £150,000 yearly.

Some interesting Australian presents have been made to the young Prince of Wales as souvenirs of their visit to Botany Bay to inspect the monument erected in commemoration of Captain Cook's landing. These consist of two blotting-pads, paper knives, and paper weights. The blotting-pads are of book form, covered with scented myall wood, inlaid with silver floral designs, and each corner is protected by bosses representing the bush blossoms of the woollen flower, which closely resembles a large daisy. Typical Australian scenes border the inner pages, which are further ornamented with the flora and fauna of Botany Bay. The paper knives are made of the same wood, in the shape of miniature war boomerangs, and bear the Prince's monograms and an oxidized silver medallion of an aboriginal warrior. The paper weights are rough malachite blocks, one supporting the figure of an emu in chased silver, the other surmounted by a kangaroo.



[LOVE'S TRIBUTE.]

NOVELETTE.]

"THE KING OF HER HEART."

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CHAPTER I.

PRESENTMENTS.

"Are you a believer in dreams, Emily?" asked Jessie Estdale.

"At times—yes, especially if they are pleasant; but I don't like those that make me fall over precipices, or send a wild bull after me with fierce eyes and formidable horns. But have you had a dream, Jessie?"

"Yes; but I won't inflict it upon you now, for here comes uncle and Lady Easton."

"I declare there's a gentleman with him," whispered Emily; "evidently a foreigner, for he looks sallow enough."

"Who can it be?" returned Jessie.

"Permit me to introduce to you, young ladies, my old friend, Sir Edward Beaumont; Sir Edward, my nieces—Miss Estdale and Miss Stewart!"

After the introduction Commodore Colville said,—

"Sir Edward is a neighbour of ours in Hampshire, and has only returned from Egypt lately."

"And I have been trying to prevail upon Sir Edward to join our party to-morrow, but I regret to say I have failed," put in Lady Easton.

"Nothing would have afforded me greater pleasure, ladies, I assure you; but pressing business must plead my excuse," he replied. Then added, "the disappointment will be mine, especially as I shall be denied what to me, after a long sojourn abroad, would be like a glimpse of paradise."

"At all events, you have not lost the happy knack of paying compliments," laughed the Commodore. "You will turn the heads of our English girls if you are not careful."

"He never need try to turn mine," thought Emily; "I would as soon flirt with a mummy as with him," but seeing the necessity of making some reply to his gallantry, she said, with a sweet smile, but with mischief lurking in her saucy eyes, and about her roguish mouth,—

"I pity the Egyptian ladies for losing such an accomplished cavalier as you must have been, Sir Edward, and am pleased that their loss should prove our gain!"

Jessie sat silent, as if oppressed with a presentiment that this stranger would prove a thorn in her side—especially as his eyes were fixed on her face with undisguised admiration.

When Sir Edward and Lady Easton had taken their leave the Commodore turned to his nieces and said,—

"Sir Edward has always taken a great interest in you both."

"In us?" said Emily, opening her eyes in astonishment.

"Why we never met him before to day, uncle!" remarked Jessie.

"Where has he dropped from? the clouds or the moon?" put in the mischievous Emily, adding, "I fail to see why he should feel an interest in us; old gentlemen don't, as a rule, except they happen to be god-pa's or doctors."

"Old!" said Commodore Colville, "why he's only fifty."

"I don't call that youthful, Jessie, do you? When I arrive at that patriarchal age I should say adieu to youth."

"I decline expressing any opinion," was the smiling reply; "besides, we are travelling away from the subject. Uncle has not said why Sir Edward should feel such a fatherly interest in us."

"Fatherly fiddlesticks," was the brusque reply.

"No, uncle!" replied the wilful Emily, "fatherly interest. But so long as he hasn't come to woo it doesn't much matter."

"Why shouldn't he? You are both of a mar-

riageable age, and cannot expect to go through life without suitors."

"Suitors, did you say, uncle?" exclaimed Emily.

"Yes, I repeat suitors, miss; it's a good old English word. And he's a prince of good fellows; and you will both bear in mind that he is my friend, and may, perhaps, be something nearer to me some day."

"May I ask, uncle, which of us your nabob means to honour?"

"Not you, madcap!" said her uncle.

"Then you are to be the future sultana, Jessie," said Emily, merrily.

"There's time enough for that, say I," laughed Jessie. "He certainly looks anything but a man given to flirtation."

"Exactly," put in Emily; "a nurse would suit him better than a wife."

"He's worth more than half the young dandies of the present day—the crutch-and-toothpick school—who hobble in tight boots, and actually go to the length of wearing stays! Egad! if they were under me aboard ship I would teach them to be men."

"What a libel, uncle! At all events, with all their failings—which are virtues in my eyes—they have youth on their side. It's better to hobble in tight boots than to be crippled with the gout," said Emily. "But you haven't told us yet, uncle, why Sir Edward should have chosen us to fix his regards upon?"

"A couple of mutinous, chattering minxes like you would drive any man out of his senses."

"Not if he were young, uncle," remarked Jessie, demurely. "Are we likely to see more of Sir Edward?"

"And will he tell us nice stories?" said Emily, "about Mungo Park, and elephants, and cannibals, and—"

"Will you be quiet, madcap?" he said, trying to look severe. "How dare you discuss my friend in his absence! As you are likely to see a great deal of him, when we return to Hampshire, I advise you to make up your minds to

be very civil to him; my letters to him have been filled with glowing descriptions of your good looks, gentleness, docility, domesticity, and—”

“Stop! stop! uncle,” said both girls, in chorus.

“Why should I pray? Don’t I try to be proud of you, and wish Sir Edward to think well of you both? He is a great catch; our estates join, and now that he has come home for good he will be casting about him for a wife. You may consider yourselves fortunate if his choice should fall on either of you. I wish he could marry you both, and relieve me of the responsibility of two such troublesome monkeys!”

Having delivered himself of this tirade he hobbled from the room, leaving the girls free for reflection.

“The idea,” said Emily, “of an old fogey like uncle turning match-maker! I wouldn’t have Sir Edward if he were hung with diamonds.”

“Not I!” remarked Jessie. “Oh, dear! why is he always drumming up strimony in our ears; I assure I have no wish to marry; have you, Emily?”

“I don’t like to answer you, Jessie. You had better ask Cousin Harry.”

“Have you seen him lately?”

“No; but I expect to very shortly. Don’t you think him nice?”

“If I could see him with your eyes I should say he was more than nice. Poor Harry! Uncle’s inclined to be a little hard upon him.”

“But he bears it all for my sake, Jessie. You shall be my bridesmaid, unless you fore-stall me by becoming Lady Beaumont.”

“Be quiet, Emily; I hope fate has something better in store for me than that.”

“Perhaps you’ll meet your fate to-morrow.”

“Perhaps,” was the laughing rejoinder. “At all events, I hope to attract someone much younger than Sir Edward; but it’s time for us to be off and dress, or we shall be late for Lady Easton’s reception.”

The cousins remembered this conversation long afterwards, when clouds of disappointment gathered over their young lives, which had been bright and happy enough until that fatal meeting with Sir Edward Beaumont.

CHAPTER II.

OH! HAPPY FATE!

THE next morning broke cloudless and beautiful, and augured well for the success of the meet of the Four-in-hand Club.

In fact, had it been possible to order a day, no better one could have been selected for the purpose.

“A light wind blew from the gates of the sun,” and throughout the morning there was a playful sport of sun and shadow.

All the hawthorns, pink and white, dotted over the sward on either side of the drive, were in bloom.

The morning air was perfumed with the almond-scented may.

The spiral chaenomelae, pink and white, had not faded away, and such as had escaped the ravages of the early spring frosts relieved the long avenues of tender green.

In the more cultivated corners, where fashion mostly congregates, the flowering shrubs of every hue and variety seemed to put on bloom, as if by enchantment; and there were peeps of landscape across the Serpentine, that sparkled in the sun, not unworthy the attention of any scenic painter.

Gradually the line of carriages extended from the magazine almost to Hyde-park-corner.

Long before mid-day crowds began to assemble.

At the upper end of the Serpentine lake came the horsemen and horsewomen, and a clear space had been reserved for the coaches at the accustomed spot.

The crowd became denser and denser directly it was whispered about that the Prince

and Princess of Wales and their three daughters were present.

As if to welcome royalty the sun shone its brightest; the breeze just rippled the surface of the water, and a dense, black crowd stretched as far as the eye could see, relieved only by the blossoms on the trees, and the coloured parasols held by the darkly-attired ladies who had not yet ventured on their summer toilette.

Lady Easton and her young charges were present in his lordship’s drag, with the addition of a gentleman of handsome presence—a Captain Gerald Bolitho.

Their voices were drowned in the buzz of conversation which was going on around them, and Emily took the opportunity of whispering to her cousin,—

“Jessie, you’ve met your fate at last!”

“Don’t be ridiculous, Emily; I am sure he’s quite as attentive to you as to me.”

“But I don’t want him; he is your cavalier from homeforth, so you had better submit to the decree of fate.”

Captain Gerald thought he had never seen a lovelier girl than Jessie Easton, and certainly she had no peerless amongst the ranks of beauty and fashion there assembled.

She wore a dark-green, tight-fitting, Newmarket coat, that showed off her rounded figure and slim waist to perfection.

Her little hat was placed jauntily upon her small, well-shaped head, and rested lightly on coils of golden hair, on which the sunlight played, producing rich tints.

Her delicate features were radiant with the bloom of youth and exultation, and the star-bloom in the heavens was not more beautiful than the colour of her matchless eyes.

The tips of her small and delicate gloved hand rested lightly on the captain’s arm, as she stood up in the drag to catch a better view of the proceedings.

“Is it not an animated scene?” he said. “I never remember a better meet than this.”

“Yes!” she replied, as she looked timidly up into his face. “This is my first season; I have never seen anything like it before. How lovely our darling princess looks!”

“I need not look so far,” he said, with a smile, “to find one equally beautiful.”

She blushed with conscious pleasure at the implied compliment, and somehow was induced to lean a little more heavily on his arm.

“Are you fond of the country, Captain Bolitho?” she asked.

“Very!” he replied. “I was born and bred in the country. Do you know Hampshire, Miss Easton?”

“Yes, that is our country.”

“How strange! that’s where I hail from. Sir Edward Beaumont is our landlord; do you know him?”

“No—that is, I only met him yesterday; he is an old friend of my uncle’s. My cousin and I don’t know many people; we have only just finished our studies. How nice it is for us to find that we shall have you for a neighbour.”

“I am, indeed, delighted; and hope we shall know more of each other.”

The conversation now became general, and Jessie caught herself stealing furtive glances at the handsome young captain, with whom, in a spirit of mischief, Emily seemed inclined to flirt desperately.

The party adjourned to Lord Easton’s to lunch; and Jessie never enjoyed herself so much in the whole course of her life, for the captain was most attentive, and her uncle was not there to see it, he being laid up with an attack of his old enemy, the gout.

A delightful day concluded by a visit to the opera, when Jessie was charmed by the captain’s brilliant powers of conversation.

He appeared to know everybody, and had a fund of anecdote, which he retailed for her amusement.

It never flashed across the mind of Lady Easton that two youthful, impressionable hearts would be assailed by Cupid, or that her charge was in any danger from coming into contact with such a man as the captain

—who, though of a good family, was not rich.

Her ladyship had been made aware of the Commodore’s ambitious views respecting the future of his nieces—of Jessie especially, who was the elder of the two, and likely to be his heiress.

Regardless of future consequences, the young girl drank in love’s poison, and felt a delicious thrill of joy whenever she met the admiring gaze of the man who had already made a deep impression upon her heart.

The evening came to an end all too soon, and when the cousins found themselves alone Emily failed not to hint Jessie about her handsome “husband,” as she chose to term the captain.

“We have both caught the scarlet fever,” she remarked. “I hope yours won’t prove a sharp attack, Jessie.”

“Nonsense! How you do run-on!” she replied, with a pretty blush; “and all because a gentleman has shown poor me a little attention.”

“Little! I should like to know whether twelve hours’ devoted billing and cooing is to be termed little! Six hours of such bliss will dear Harry would have sufficed for me.”

“For goodness’ sake be cautious, Emily, if you love me, or uncle will persecute me dreadfully; you know how he hates young men.”

“Pah! love laughs at uncles, aunts, and grandmothers, as well as at lords, ladies and basemen. You do like the captain, don’t you?”

“A little; I found him very agreeable.”

“Charming simplicity, delightful innocence! You ought to kiss me, Jessie, for not interfering with your beau. I found him very insignificant when I took the trouble to flirt with him in the drag; I prefer Harry a thousand times!”

“I wish you wouldn’t be such a tease, Emily! I am sleepy. Good-night!”

“Good-night, sweet coz! You won’t be Lady Beaumont after all.”

Thanks to Lady Easton, who unconsciously afforded them many opportunities, the lovers met pretty frequently, and the captain, before the end of the season, was secretly engaged to the lovely Jessie.

Emily was very good, and actually suppressed her inclinations by not even once mentioning Bolitho’s name in her uncle’s hearing.

Sir Edward, although absent in Hampshire, appeared anxious to have a place in Jessie’s memory.

He sent presents of game, fruit, and flowers, and always mentioned her in his letters to her uncle as his charming niece.

All this troubled her much, and she looked forward with forebodings to the approaching visit to Holmdale, her uncle’s seat.

CHAPTER III.

LOVE’S SWEETNESS.

It was May again—bright, beautiful May, the queen-month of spring.

The birds sang in the woods their music soft and sweet, like the melody of some far-off sphere.

The air was fragrant with the scent of flowers, and from the woods and wild hedges rows came the hawthorn’s rich perfume.

Jessie, who waited under an old oak tree, well remembered the sweet odour of this spring blossom, when last year she had inhaled it in the London park when she had first met her fate.

She loved deeply, truly, tenderly, and knew that it was returned with a passionate warmth that appealed to her very soul, and steeped her senses in delight.

She was waiting for him now in the grove, where the timid nightingale gushed forth in bursts of delightful song.

She almost held her breath to listen if, among the songs of birds and the hum of insects, she could hear the one sound that her heart was panting for.

A footstep, light and rapid, came along the gravel path.

In another moment his arm encircled her waist, and he laid a hand caressingly on her cheek, which was glowing like a rose in the sunshine.

For some moments they stood together in silent rapture, broken only by swift, sweet kisses, she trembling with excessive happiness, he gazing upon her with love-laden eyes.

"And you have come at last, dear Gerald," she said, softly, as she allowed her head to rest upon his shoulder.

"Yes, darling! my feet were winged with the speed of love. Is this not a paradise to be near you, to hold you in my arms, and to know that you are mine?"

"Yes, dearest!" she murmured.

"And you will be mine for ever and for aye?"

"Have I not already told you that my love is yours, and that no other man can ever come between us?"

His reply was a sweet kiss, which she returned, as she clung to his arm and gazed with exquisite tenderness into his handsome face.

"Will your uncle give me this little hand?" he said, softly, as he pressed the little rose-tipped fingers to his lips. "And do you indeed love me, darling? Do whisper the words into my ear again that I may drink in the sweet sounds; for you know I leave to-morrow, and I want to carry the assurance with me as a gauge of your faith; it will be my boast of mail to resist temptations, and to win a man for myself, as a soldier, that you will be proud of."

"Dear, dear Gerald! I loved you from the moment I saw you, I shall love you till I die. I can never understand how I could have lived before we met!" And as she spoke she hid her blushing face on his shoulder—calm, happy, full of hope, in a dream of blissful content.

When Bolitho sought the Commodore, telling his love, and begging his consent, the reply was,—

"I shall be very happy to talk upon this subject, Mr. Bolitho, in a year's time; but my niece is under age, and has seen very little of the world at present. She is also entirely dependent upon me, but I shall eventually make her my heiress if she obeys my wishes. I can say no more now; I am no advocate for long engagements."

"But, sir, you will not influence her during my probation? You will allow me to communicate sometimes?"

"I can promise nothing of the kind. I have other projects connected with my niece, therefore can give you no further hope."

At last the sad good-byes had been spoken between the lovers; vows of undying affection and constancy had been breathed—alas! in too many cases to be broken as soon as uttered.

Three months after the above occurrence news arrived to the distracted Jessie to the effect that her lover had fallen, mortally wounded, in one of the sanguinary battles that were being fought so relentlessly between her own country and the Boers.

CHAPTER IV.

JESSIE'S ANSWER.

In Hampshire, not far from the town of Salisbury and the sea, stands Holmdale Manor, one of the finest estates that eyes could enjoy or behold.

The mansion stands in th'ry acres of grand, old cultivated grounds, the timber of which has grown through ages.

Lovely rivulets, labyrinths of flowers and shrubs, where the gardener's artistic, but mechanical hand had never professed, met the eye, and perfumed with sweet scent the senses and the atmosphere.

This is the home of Commodore Colville and his lovely nieces.

The two girls are seated in a beautiful little morning room, in exciting conversation. They

present a pretty picture, as they are perfect contrasts to each other.

One is the beautiful Jessie; the other, Emily Stewart, the orphan daughter of the Commodore's late wife's sister.

Being alone in the world the Commodore had taken her to his heart and home.

Her mother had been a great favourite of his in bygone years, and he loved this wilful girl even dearer than Jessie.

Emily Stewart was a lovely girl of a piquant type, with laughter-loving eyes, a roguish mouth and smile, a thorough mischievous madcap, a regular elf, and the only one who dares to contradict the old Commodore, or set his will at defiance.

"I cannot see," she said, demurely, "why you should pine away here upon only the memory of that hero of yours? Sweet coz, my opinion is this: that your beauty will all fade, and nobody will look at you at all then; and I shall be the pet and favourite among the eligibles here."

"Can you never be serious, Emily? You really provoke me by your silly talk!" Jessie said, gravely. "You know what uncle is trying to do, and yet you have no feeling for me. I cannot bear the thought of this hateful man he has chosen. If he compels me to wed him I shall die, I know I shall! My heart lies in the grave with my lost love. Oh! spare me your silly chatter, Emily; try and be serious for once in your life."

"I am so sorry, sweet coz, to make you cross with me; I promise never to offend again," exclaimed the impulsive girl, as she threw her arms round Jessie's neck and kissed her affectionately.

A servant entered the room with the message from the Commodore, desiring the attendance of Miss Esdale directly.

The old Commodore was confined to his room with an attack of the gout, and was swathed in bandages, and consequently not improved in temper.

"Good-morning, uncle; are you any better?"

"Better, mind! Do you think your obstinate conduct is conducive to my health? You know perfectly well that my aim now in life is to see you settled before I—I die!"

"Oh! dear uncle, don't talk like that. You may live many years, and I will be your loving, devoted companion, to nurse and comfort you."

"I tell you, girl, it cannot be! I have promised you to Sir Edward Beaumont as his wife, and his wife you must become. He is—not well-favoured—rich, and belongs to a good old family. I have set my heart upon this match, and all you have to do is to obey," adding, "He is coming here this evening to be received as your suitor; so mind and be ready to give him the reception he expects from his future bride. Now go; I am tired," the old man said, in a grumbling tone.

"You will break my heart if you persist in forcing this unholy marriage, uncle; and you will be sorry," she replied, as the tears coursed down her cheeks.

"Fiddlesticks! I never yet heard of a girl breaking her heart at the thoughts of taking a husband. Now obey me, and leave me; I am tired."

She slowly left the invalid's room, with one fixed determination to tell her story to Sir Edward that night, and throw herself upon his mercy.

When Jessie returned to find her cousin, to hold a council of war concerning this hateful union, she caught sight of that young lady in the act of pinning a flower, which compelled her to stand upon tiptoe to reach Harry Tilier's button-hole.

A sweet, sad smile illuminated her face, as she murmured, "Poor, bright little cousin, may that smile of happiness never be clouded as mine has been," and then giving orders for her pony carriage, she drove into the village to see her poor pensioners, and to try and forget her own sorrows in alleviating those of others.

"I want to talk to you, Emily dear,

seriously," whispered Harry. "Let us go to our mossy dell. Come, sweet! it is carpeted with roses now, as fragrant as your lips."

He drew her arm within his own, and led her on.

Before them, through the over-arching trees, could be seen a splendid view of the open country, and the rippling waters of the Avon, bathed in golden rays of a glorious summer sun.

"What a beautiful view, Harry! Oh! I am so happy," she exclaimed, clapping her hands in childish glee.

"It is not the view, dear ladybird, that has brought me here to expatriate upon, and go into ecstasies with," he said, "but love."

And he passed his arm around her shoulder, and untied her hat, saying, as he smoothed her beautiful head,—

"This is how I like to see you, my love, my queen! I like to see your silvery hair in all its glory; but that is not all I admire in my pet! I love to gaze into those starry eyes, to fathom their depths, their mystery, their love."

"Do you really love me so much then, dear Harry?" the blushing girl returned.

"Can you ask me, darling? Have I not haunted your walks—your rides, and even felt impatient when dear Cousin Jessie has been by your side?"

"Well, I never!" she said, with an arch smile. "I never thought you loved me like this; why, it's quite romantic! But I do love you better than all the world, dear Harry," and she dropped her blushing face upon his shoulder.

He strained her to his breast, and imprinted passionate kisses on her cheeks, her lips and brow.

Glowing with colour Emily strove to release herself.

"Let me go—let me go! It is getting late, and my uncle may want me," she pleaded. "If he only knew that I was here with you what a kettle of fish there would be!"

"I am going to ask his consent, ladybird, to our marriage as soon as he is better. I cannot go on like this any longer; I must know the worst."

"Oh! for Heaven's sake, don't, dear Harry, hewill turn both Jessie and me out of the house. Be patient; you know I love you, and will wait for years. Besides, we are very happy; we see each other often, and we come to this quiet little spot and talk, and all that kind of thing," she replied, archly.

"How childish you are, little queen. Do you not know that I want you for myself, my wife, my companion never to leave my side? I must speak or you will perhaps share the fate of poor Jessie, and be forced into a loveless, godless union. I must know the worst."

"But Harry, darling, don't talk so rash; you frighten me, you shall not speak to him till I tell you," she said, firmly. "I do not mind his temper myself, but I cannot bear to see him in a rage with you. I saw it once, when you remonstrated about poor Jessie and this hateful man he has got for her husband, and I can never forget it; it was dreadful! And to see you stand before him, with your lips compressed so bitterly, and your eyes fleshing under their lids, like a smothered fire; no, I cannot bear to witness such a scene again."

"Fear not, darling, I will obey your will; but I must ask you not to keep me too long in suspense."

And so the young lovers chatted until they arrived at the house.

That evening Sir Edward pressed his suit with all the gentleness, tact and sophistry of an accomplished man of the world.

"But I do not love you," Jessie exclaimed, haughtily; "surely you do not desire an unwilling bride?"

"Love, my dear Miss Esdale, will come after our marriage."

"Never, Sir Edward!" she hissed, between her clenched teeth. "I thought you would listen to me, or at least give me time to weep over my lost love; even you I thought would pity my sorrow."

"Sweet girl, forgive me this persistence. I love you so much, and have had your image in my heart from the first time I saw you. I will devote my life to you! I will do anything to make you happy!"

"Why not give me up and tell my uncle you have changed your mind, and let me go in peace?"

"You ask me too much, dearest girl; command anything but that, and I will be your willing slave," was his reply.

"You will? Then do not mention this subject to me for six months, and I promise you that I will at the end of that time allow you to speak to me again, and I—"

"You will consent then," he exclaimed, seizing her hands, "to be my bride, my—"

"Your wife—yes," was her reply. "Now leave me, and remember my commands."

Gathering her skirts round her shapely limbs, she bowed courteously and was gone, leaving him in a very uncertain frame of mind, but yet with a certain amount of satisfaction at having gained his point so far.

CHAPTER V.

LOVE'S DIFFICULTIES.

"WHAT is the matter, dear Harry, tell me? Why do you look so—so dreadful?" cried Jessie, one evening, as she entered the drawing-room, where Tilyer was lying full length upon a couch, with wild, despairing, haggard eyes.

He started up, and cried,

"Heaven's judgment light upon him! He has wrecked my happiness; life is no longer endurable!"

He pushed past her and hurried upstairs.

Something in his face alarmed Jessie, and she followed quickly the mad youth into his room, only just in time to spring forward and dash a revolver from his grasp.

She confronted him, exclaiming,—

"Good Heavens! Harry, what does this mean?"

Tilyer looked at her, wildly, for a minute, and then burst into a hollow laugh.

"That I am mad!"

"Come, dear cousin," she said, coaxingly, "we have been as brother and sister to each other, confide this fearful sorrow to me; perhaps I can aid you in some way."

"Do you not know that I love Emily, and that we were betrothed to each other? and now—now," and burying his head in his hands he burst into a violent flood of weeping, which relieved his overcharged brain.

"And now, dear Harry," she said, soothingly; "so you have asked uncle to consent and has refused; is not that the trouble?"

"Yes," he gasped, "he insulted me! called me a presumptuous upstart—a baggar!"

"All will, perhaps, come right, dear," she whispered. "Emily loves you, and will be true to you. Uncle may yet relent; be patient. Who knows what may happen in a few short months; kingdoms have been lost and won in less time!"

"I shall leave this place at once, and return to the Cape," he replied, gloomily, "and there I hope I may die! At all events, I shall be able to render some good to my country, if none to myself, by affording help to suffering humanity."

"What—what is all this about, Milly? Is anything the matter?" asked Emily, in a faint, uncertain voice, of her maid.

"Nothing, Miss Emily, but a little fainting fit you have had, and you are now better."

"Oh I know—I know, now," said Emily, as memory slowly returned.

"Send for Miss Esdale; tell her I wish to speak to her."

In a minute Jessie was by her side, pouring *ea-de-cologne* on her temples, and kissing her sweet young face with true, loving, womanly sympathy.

"Try and sleep, my dear. Come, put your arms round my neck, and let us talk till you feel drowsy."

"I cannot! Where is Harry?" she cried, starting suddenly up in the bed. "He is my betrothed! my love!" and the poor girl sank down again, shivering in a paroxysm of weeping and laughter.

The hysterical fit soon reached its crisis, and Emily lay at last quiet and calm, though very weak.

Suddenly she heard a bustle, a noise on the stairs. Rising on her elbow she listened eagerly.

"Where is Emily?" cried a voice.

"Here! here! dear Harry. Run up here, quick—quick, Harry," she cried, vehemently, impetuously rising from the snowy drapery around her.

He sprang up the stairs, and was by her side, exclaiming,—

"My poor ladybird, they are killing you," as he clasped his arms around her, while she burst into a passion of sobbing, clinging to him till he felt her heart swelling, throbbing against his own.

He grew very pale, and compressed his lips, and tried to unclasp her arms, but she clung closer, crying between her sobs,—

"Oh, Harry, be true to me; I will never marry anyone but you! They may kill me before I wed another."

"I will be true, my own ladybird, my sweet love, till death. Now I must go. Good-bye—good-bye! but not for ever."

Her hands released their hold, and she sank back on her pillow exhausted.

He was gone.

A month has passed since Tilyer left Holmdale; one letter had been received, and that was for Emily.

It brought the roses to her cheeks, the laughing dimples to her mouth; she was once again the merry madcap, the mischievous elf.

The Commodore informed her that she was to prepare to enter a college to finish her education, which Lady Weston suggested was deficient; but his real object was to separate her from Jessie, as he feared that they would conspire to defeat his plans.

To his surprise she received the sentence with great calmness—only her eyes were really flashing beneath their demure lids, her lips were puckered up with a suppressed smile, and her whole form and face were instinct with the concealed anticipation of some unpremeditated mischief and delicious fun.

Oh! she was willing, certainly; there was nothing she would like better, or so well, and so it was settled.

Preparations were being hurried on, as the Commodore thought a year's strict surveillance, combined with the companionship of girls of her own age, and change of scene, would be a thorough cure to the love-sick maiden.

But he knew not the girl whom he had to deal with. He, like many others, was blind, and even deaf except to his own wishes.

"Don't fret, dearest coz, *I'll be back in a week!*" she said, mysteriously, to Jessie, who was weeping at the thought of their separation.

"Not so soon as that, my dear Emily. I hope, though I shall miss you very much. Still, dear, you have not quite finished your education, and if you can bear it, why, I feel it is certainly for the best," she said, with a sigh. "I must not be selfish."

"Fiddlesticks about for the best. I tell you that my conduct shall be such that I shall return in a week. The idea of my wanting any more education!" she said, with a pretty toss of her head. "Harry never said such a thing; I was good enough for him, and—"

"You mean I am a great humbug, eh! Well, dear, I was trying to put the best face upon it, to get a ray of comfort, for indeed I feel this parting keenly," replied Jessie.

"Now you will be compelled to entertain that bore, Sir Edward, alone; to put up with his odious love-making when I am gone. Now speak the truth, dear coz, would you not like me to return as I say I shall—in a week? I

should at least be able to act as a marplot to your would-be ogre of a bridegroom."

"Yes, Emily, I should, but I do not wish you to offend our uncle by any of your wild mischievous tricks; pray be prudent, for all our sakes."

A sunny morning, and the time for departure had arrived.

Emily now took leave of her cousin and her friends—they in tears, she with downcast eyelids, with mirth and mischief dimpling her roguish mouth.

After many hours' drive the carriage stopped before a handsome, imposing structure, standing on rising ground amidst a grove of trees, after passing through a handsome gate upon a gravelled and elm-shaded drive.

The entrance-hall stood open. The Commodore alighted, and led his niece up the marble steps to the main entrance, where they were received by an attendant.

The old Commodore bowed respectfully, and requested to see Madame Seaton.

They were shown immediately into a plainly-furnished, but neat sitting-room, where they were received by a comely, benignant-looking gentlewoman of about thirty years of age, whose voice was so pleasant that its tones haunted the ear for months afterwards.

As everything had been arranged by epistolary correspondence between the lady and Commodore Colville, there was now nothing to do but to deliver Emily into her hands and take his leave.

The Commodore's heart sank lower and lower as the moment arrived to part with the "minx," as he styled her.

He would even have gladly taken her back with him, and now that it was too late regretted he had taken this step.

He longed to gather her to his bosom and kiss her fondly, but he durst not do so, lest his resolution should fail him. So pressing her hand, and bidding her a fatherly good-bye, he took his leave, bitterly regretting the untoward fate that had compelled him to leave his "monkey" in that "gloomy prison," as he chose to miscall the most beautiful and picturesque spot in all England.

Emily was not one to sit and mope under misfortune, nor did she intend to be anything but merry during the short s'ay she meant to make at Beaufort House.

"Let me see," she thought, "I won't commence proceedings to-day, but to-morrow they shall be in an uproar, and uncle will be only too glad to take me home again, and keep me there until dear Harry returns to claim me. Besides, I have to help Jessie in her war against old Methusalem the ogre, who wants to eat her up, but shan't if I can help it."

She soon made friends with the young ladies, who took her round the grounds, and pointed out the sweetest apple and pear-trees, and showed her Miss Kezziah Blinker's retreat where, under an arbour of roses, she was wont to recite love-passages from her favourite authors.

"What a name!" she thought, but said, "who is the lady?"

"Our head governess," said a chorus of fresh young voices.

"Is she nice, young, or old? and is she in love?"

There was an outburst of laughter, which rang through the place like music and floated away in merry echoes.

"I cannot permit such boisterous conduct, young ladies!" said a thin, sharp voice; as the speaker emerged from her favourite retreat.

Seeing Emily among the group, Miss Blinker said, "I suppose you are the new boarder whom madame expected?"

"Yes, if you please," Emily answered, demurely, as she made a little curtsey and took a good look at her questioner.

She was tall and thin, and full of sharp angles, and wore her hair, which was of reddish hue, in corkscrew-like ringlets.

"I hope we shall be great friends, Miss Stuart," she said, as she made a stately

curtsie. Turning to the merry group, she added,—

"I hope you will all make Miss Stuart at home among you, as she is to make a long stay with us."

"Am I!" thought Emily, "wait till to-morrow, and then give your opinion, Miss Stiff-starch."

"Madame Seaton has arranged that you should share my apartment until your own room is ready, and as you are a stranger to the place you will feel less lonely, Miss Stuart," said the governess.

This piece of news did not help to make Emily very contented, for she was not highly impressed with the prim Miss Blinker, or the prospect of sharing her sleeping apartment with her.

Their conversation was put an end to by the loud clanging of the supper bell, and the girls paired off to the dining-hall, headed by Miss Blinker.

Watching her opportunity Emily reached her chamber, and locking the door gently, knelt down and unpacked one of her trunks, from which she took a parcel and concealed it between the mattress of her bed, muttering, "Stay there until you are wanted, which may be to-night; the prim Miss Blinker little knows what is in store for her. Oh! what fun it will be; but I hope she is a sound sleeper, or all my plans will be frustrated, and I shall come to ignominious grief. Well, I don't care; I shall get expelled, and that is what I want."

Having made her little arrangements to her satisfaction she unlocked the door and joined her new friends in the school-room, looking as innocent as an angel.

"What branch of study do you intend pursuing, Miss Stuart?" said a tall, dark girl, who had taken a great liking to Emily.

"Mathematics," she replied, laughing, "as I intend going up for the Cambridge exam., and taking all the honours I can get, which won't many," she thought.

"I wish you every success I am sure, dear Miss Stuart; but I am so sorry that my term is nearly up, and I should so liked to have had you for my friend."

"Thanks, Miss Howard," she replied, "but I do not intend to stay long myself, that is—correcting herself—"If I can finish my studies soon."

"But madame said you had come for a year," replied Miss Howard, her eyes widening with astonishment.

"Did she! well, really!" she said, with a merry twinkle in her eyes; "but perhaps she won't care to keep me so long, especially if she objects to mischievous pranks."

"I am afraid you would find her very severe if you caused her displeasure, for she is very strict in everything relating to discipline or decorum."

"I am glad to hear that," thought Emily, "because my little *ruse* will succeed, and uncle will be checkmated, and I shall be at home with Jessie again."

The lamp was turned down low, and Miss Blinker was sleeping the sleep of the just, and snoring just a little, when madcap Emily rose from her white dimity-curtained bed, and pulled out the mysterious parcel from between the mattresses.

In less than ten minutes' time she stood before the glass looking at the picture of a handsome young officer, wig, moustache, and imperial, all complete.

"It will do nicely," she whispered to herself. "And now to salute thy ruby lips, dearest of Blinkers. But won't there be a commotion, presently, and oh! goodness! whatever will they do to me if they detect me! Shall I—yes, I must dare it; I have gone too far to recede. Courage, men ami; be a brave soldier, and do not disgrace your cloth," she added, with a tragic air.

Approaching on tip-toe to the bedside, she leaned down and kissed the sleeper, hardly able to restrain her merriment.

"I'll see what kis number two will do,"

she thought, as she again saluted the sleeping Blinker, this time more loudly than before.

"Yes, yes! is it time to rise?" the governess asked, half sleepily.

"No, sweet Keziah; loveliest of your sex, behold me at your feet, where I'd be if I could stoop, but I can't," said Emily, in a feigned voice.

Miss Blinker slowly opened one eye, and then the other, and then exclaimed, in tones of terror, "Keep off, you bad, wicked, young man," giving vent to piercing screams, which rang through the house, and then she pulled the bedclothes over her head to shut out the dreadful vision.

Emily quickly donned her night-robe over her regiments, and jumped into bed, forgetting, however, to take off the wig and moustaches.

To stifle her laughter she crammed her handkerchief into her mouth, and lay still as a mouse. Presently there came a succession of loud raps at the door, and madame's voice was heard demanding admittance.

"Miss Stuart," said the governess, in a terrified whisper, "get up and let them in; I dare not, for there is a horrid man in the room."

"What, me, Miss Blinker! Oh, I cannot! I am so frightened!" and she hid her head right down in the bed-clothes, from whence curious cachinatory sounds were heard, which did not conduce to allay the alarm of her companion, who in sheer desperation made a rush to the door, and threw it wide open, admitting the clamouring group.

"What is the meaning of this unseemly disturbance, Miss Blinker? Explain," said Madame Seaton.

"A man—an officer, came and kissed me, madame," she gasped.

In spite of their terror, several of the young ladies could not avoid giggling at the idea of any man daring to kiss the prudish spinster.

"But where is Miss Stuart, did she see him?"

"Poor young lady!" the governess said, "do see to her, for I fear the fright has brought on hysteria."

Madame hastened to her bedside, and said, "Dear Miss Stuart, where are you? you will be smothered. Do not be frightened; we are all here to protect you."

Slowly Emily's pretty head emerged from its concealment, with two dark mischievous eyes glancing at the group, as if in wonderment at what was happening.

"What is this I see!" said madame, sharply. "Why, goodness, gracious, you have a man's wig on your head!"

Overwhelmed at this fatal discovery poor Emily put her little, white hand to her head, and, horror upon horrors, found she had forgotten to take off the tell-tale wig.

"I am in for it, she thought; all my fun is over in this place. Whatever shall I say?"

In feeling for her wig her night-robe was disarranged, disclosing the officer's uniform.

"Man, indeed!" said madame, indignantly, "how dare you assume such an improper masquerade, and the first night of your stay under this roof? You shall hear from me to-morrow, Miss Stuart," this as she left the room with offended dignity, followed by the girls, who were all tittering, and who, on reaching their own apartments, gave way to their laughter.

To do the governess justice she tried to console Emily, but that young lady was not in need of sympathy, having brought about the affair deliberately to get herself expelled.

The Commodore's letter to madame, when she wrote him complaining of his niece's escapade, explained something of Emily's naturally mischievous nature, assuring her that it was for the cure of this very fault that he had placed her under her charge; begging her not consider the matter too severely—saying that what in a model young lady of society might be deemed a shocking impropriety, was in his niece a mere venial error, entreating her to accept the apology and atonement that

she should command Miss Stuart to make, and to try her a little longer.

The letter to Emily was quite another matter; it was short, not sweet, but crusty and characteristic. It was couched in the following terms:—

"You plague of my life, if you don't go down on your knees and beg the good lady's pardon and put things straight, I'll know the reason why, I'll be shot if I don't!—Your uncle,—
ARTHUR COLVILLE."

This unfortunately-worded letter restored Emily to herself by putting to flight all new feelings of maidenly propriety, and brought back all her love of fun, frolic, and mischief.

Laughing immoderately she seized her pen and wrote as follows,—

"MY DEAR UNCLE,—

"I shall not go down on my knees to any being under Heaven, wouldn't do it to save my life; and if you don't come in two days' time from this and take me home, I'll—leave you to imagine what I'll do next?—Your dutiful niece,
EMILY STUART."

Emily's letter had the desired effect, for in three days' time she was back again in dear old Holmdale, with her cousin Jessie, her flowers, and her pets.

The Commodore seldom looked or spoke to his refractory niece; he seemed thoroughly angry now that he had time for reflection.

But little the sprite cared for his black looks; she had gained her point, and was back again. Joy beamed from her eyes as she read and re-read the little missive which bore a foreign post-mark—the much-loved and treasured letter from Harry, her lover; who spoke of hope in the future, and of his speedy return to England with a great surprise.

What cared she for harsh, black looks from her grumpy old uncle, with such a talisman resting in her bosom!

The fair girl was proof against all he could devise to punish her; she but lived for that future, which her beloved Harry so glowingly sketched before her in his welcome letters.

The Commodore was again confined to his room with one of his old attacks, brought on, he declared, by the worry of the minx.

She never dared show her saucy face near him lest he should throw his crutch at her—which he repeatedly said he would, if she dared to approach him. But she would smile and toss her pretty head, and mutter,—

"Yes, indeed! I should like to see him do it! Where should I be?"

CHAPTER VI.

A HEROINE.

MANY bitter feelings possessed Jessie against her obstinate uncle, who, not content with cruelly insisting on a hateful marriage for herself, had banished Harry from Holmdale, and driven him in despair to probably find a grave in the deathly climate of Africa.

How she longed for a dear mother to confide her sorrow to!

She was alone in the world, and her lover was taken from her by death, and she had not even the consolation of knowing his last resting-place, to shed tears over his grave.

Poor Emily was too young to enter into her feelings, and Lady Easton always sided with her uncle, thinking the match highly advantageous in every manner.

She lost all interest in life as the time seemed fast passing when she would have to consummate this hateful marriage, or disobey her uncle, and be driven from his roof as an ingrate—a stranger—a beggar!

She avoided him now as much as she possibly could, always fearing that one dread subject.

As she was leaving the dinner-table one evening, thinking of escape a *steal*, he suddenly exclaimed,—

"Are you making preparations for your wedding, Jessie? I wish it to be on worthy of your beauty, and my *steal* position in the country, so don the

spend lavishly. I should like you to talk and advise with Lady Easton, she being mighty well up in these affairs, and no doubt would help you to choose your finery."

"I wish, dear uncle, you would not mention the subject to me; it is more than painful. I know you have the rights of a parent, and I think I have tried to do my duty as a child, but I do not see why I am compelled to be reminded of my sacrifice. There is plenty of time for my *treasures*, as I shall not marry for four months at the least, if I do at all. I am not a slave to be bartered," she said, bitterly.

These interviews caused her to shed many bitter tears, and she would retire from the room thoroughly heartbroken and wretched.

One night, about a month after Emily's return home from the college, she pleaded fatigue, and retired to her room earlier by an hour than was her wont.

She had received a letter that day which no eyes but hers must gaze upon. She drank in its sweet contents, and sat lost to all sense of time till she heard the great clock in the hall strike the hour of midnight.

She quickly undressed, feeling somewhat nervous at being up alone at that mysterious, lonesome hour, when all the family were abed and asleep.

Her dreams were very varied and troubled. She thought she was in a ship, and that it was on fire, and saw and heard the panic and horror that ensued.

She woke in a terrible fright. A part of the dream was true—her chamber was filled with smoke, and the mansion was chaotic with noise and confusion, and resounded with cries of "Fire! Fire!" everywhere. What happened next passed with the swiftness of lightning.

She jumped out of bed, seized a woollen shawl and wrapped it round her head, and fled from the room.

She flew down the passages and stairs, and out by the great hall that was all in flames, until she reached the lawn, where the panic-stricken household were assembled, weeping, moaning, and wringing their hands while they gazed upon the work of destruction before them in impotent despair.

Emily looked all around upon the group, each figure of which glared redly in the light of the flames.

Jessie, and all were present, but the Commodore.

"Where is my uncle?" she cried, running wildly about. "Jessie! where is our uncle?" she screamed.

"Oh, Heavens! I cannot answer you, Emily! Oh! he is in the burning house! What shall we do to save him?" exclaimed Jessie, wringing her hands. "Oh! will nobody save him? will nobody save him?"

It was too late; Commodore Colville was in the burning house, fast asleep!

"Good Heavens! will no one attempt to save him?" screamed the distracted girls, running wildly from one to the other.

They all gazed upon the burning building, every window of which was belching flame, while the sound of falling rafters, or the explosion of some combustible substance was continually heard. To venture into that blazing pile, with its burning and falling roof, seemed certain death.

Suddenly Emily said,

"Pray for me, Jessie!" and she darted like a bird into the house, and seemed lost in smoke and flame.

The wing of the mansion where her uncle slept was clearer of smoke, and fortunately had only just commenced to catch fire.

Wrapping the woollen shawl closely about her, and keeping near the floor she swiftly gained his room.

There he lay in a deep sleep; she sprang to his bedside, seized and shook the arm of the sleeper.

"Uncle! uncle! wake, for Heaven's sake, wake! the house is on fire!"

"Hum—m—m—e!" muttered the old gentleman, giving a great heave and plunge,

and turning over into a heavier sleep than before.

"Uncle! uncle! you will be burned to death, if you don't wake up!" cried Emily, shaking him violently.

"Humph! yes, Emily; um—um—I'll teach you to dress in man's—um clo—t—h—e—s," muttered the dreamer throwing about his arms.

"Holmdale is in flames, uncle! Awake! awake!" she cried, frantically.

At that moment there was the sound of falling timber.

Every instant was worth a life, and there he lay overpowered with sleep.

Oh surely the angels who saved the children in the fiery furnace will hold up this sinking roof!

Leaping upon the bolster behind his great, sleepy head, she reached over, and seizing his grey, grizzled beard she pulled it with all her might, until, roaring with pain, he started up in a fury, exclaiming,

"What in the world are you up to, you little wretch, you spiteful minx, you she tormenter!"

A sudden thought struck Emily to move him by his affection for herself.

"Uncle, look around you, the house is burning! If you do not rouse yourself and save your poor little 'minx,' she must perish in the flames!"

This effectually brought him to his senses; he understood everything; he leaped from his bed, seized a blanket, enveloped her in it, raised her in his arms; and forgetting gout, lameness, leg and all, bore her down the creaking, heated stairs, through the burning passages, out of the house in safety.

Oh, surely, the angels had held up the sinking roof, for as soon as they had passed out it fell with an awful resonance, sending up huge flames to Heaven, bearing as it were, the story of a young girl's heroism.

A shout of joy greeted the Commodore as he appeared with Emily.

She, poor girl, had fainted; the terror and excitement had been too much, the reaction too powerful; it had overwhelmed her.

There she lay across his arm, her fair head hanging back, her white garments streaming in the midnight air, her golden hair floating, her witching eyes closed; so she lay like Cordelia in the arms of King Lear.

CHAPTER VII.

A HATEFUL WOOFER.

AFTER the events recorded in the preceding chapter, Emily suffered a long and painful illness, during which her bright hair was cut off.

Lady Easton had placed her house at the service of the suffering family, and after six weeks' devoted care and tender nursing of untiring attention from her cousin Jessie, whose whole time was spent at the bedside of the young invalid, she was pronounced convalescent; but her physicians ordered change of air and scene.

A mansion was taken in Cromwell-gate, South Kensington.

Her health rapidly improved, and she gave herself up to pleasure with all the enthusiasm of a novice.

None so gay as she! Her hair had not been cut so close but that it would curl and cluster in little golden rings around her laughing forehead, giving fresh pliancy to the fairy face.

Holmdale was in the hands of the architects and builders, and would not be ready for the family before Christmas.

It was five o'clock, and the ladies at Kensington were sipping afternoon tea out of tiny little blue cups.

It was a very pretty, cheerful apartment, entirely furnished in blue satin and satin-wood; delicate lace curtains mingled with the satin hangings, and shut out the glare of the strong autumn sun.

The tinkling of the tea-cups ceased as the door

opened, and Sir Edward entered the room with the Commodore.

Conversation became general, but Jessie sat cold and still.

Sir Edward had come for his answer—her final decision.

"Is it true, then, that you consent to make me the happiest of men, my sweet girl?"

He saw a slight shudder pass over her as if some cold wind had smitten her.

She did not lift her eyes, but said, "I told you I would give you my answer—I now give it. I consent—it is my uncle's wish—it is yours."

"The adoration of a life shall repay you," he murmured in the conventional phrase, and kissed her hand, which he drew within his arm, and led her to her uncle, saying,—

"Jessie has consented to be my wife; I shall have an angel now to watch and pray for me."

The old man caught her to his breast and kissed the trembling girl's cold cheek, with a glisten of tears in his eyes.

All the while Jessie might have been made of marble—she was so calm, and never once lifted her eyes.

"Bah! how she loathes me!" he said in his teeth. "She will be mine though, and then she shall love me."

Lady Easton glided towards them, and lifted her lips to Jessie's cheek.

"My sweet child, I am charmed, delighted," she whispered.

"I thank you, Lady Easton," was her reply, and she left the room with a heart numbed, frozen; but she was soon followed by her sympathising cousin Emily, who wept and clung round Jessie, murmuring words of hope and comfort.

"Why, dear, who knows what may occur in a month! My dear Harry may perhaps be home by that time," though what she thought he could do to alter the state of affairs, especially as he was forbidden to think of herself, would be hard to imagine.

"Now I have thought of a grand scheme, dear, and that is to beg our uncle to let you off this hateful marriage by the memory of my saving his life. He ought to grant me anything for that bit of business. I don't think he could refuse. Why, if I had let him die you could have married who you like. Oh! I see my way quite clearly; it's as good as done."

"My darling Emily, don't talk so rashly; my promise is given, and now I must submit. Do not pain me further, I am tired—sick;" and the poor girl girl threw herself on her couch, refusing to be comforted even by the "minx."

Jessie carried out her plan, and had an interview with her uncle.

She told him she would never have entered the burning house if she thought he could have lived and been as cruel to Jessie; but he only stormed with rage, and ordered her from his presence, more angry than he had ever felt with her before.

"I don't care," she said, when she left his angry presence, "let him try to get me a husband, that's all! When Harry comes home we'll run off and get married; he can't marry us, that's one comfort."

"What a strange, dear creature you are, Jessie," said Lady Easton to her one day when they were discussing the wedding outfit. "Any other girl would be delighted at her presents and the splendid prospect."

"I am not as other girls are, madame; hope there is no other girl in all the world like me."

"My dear, it is no use your burying your love in a dead man's grave. Why, nothing could be better than this marriage to erase from your memory these morbid ideas; your future husband is a gentleman, and an old and valued friend of your good uncle's."

"Yes, he's rather antiquated," chimed in saucy Emily. "What a pity our uncle can't marry us himself; he certainly seems very fond of having a finger in the pie; he's a regular marplot."

"Fie! fie! Emily. You are, as your uncle says, a complete madcap, and will require

well looking after," returned Lady Easton, smiling.

The jewels Sir Edward had sent his betrothed were superb.

But she was passive and silent always; when he kissed her hand she trembled from head to foot.

"Are you afraid of me?" he would murmur.

"No, I am not afraid," she would reply.

She could not tell him that she felt revulsion so great that she could have sprung from the balcony and dashed herself upon the stones beneath.

"Cannot you say that you like me ever so little now?" he persisted, thinking that all his generosity might have borne some fruit.

"No, I cannot!"

He laughed grimly and bitterly.

"And yet I dare take you even as you are, you cold, beautiful child!"

"I cannot tell you a falsehood."

"Will you never tell me one?"

"No, never!"

"I believe you. You are a young saint." Jessie stood aloof from him. The sunshine shone on her beautiful head, and the long straight folds of her white dress; her hands were clasped in front of her, and the sadness in her face gave it greater gravity and beauty.

She was looking away from him into the blue sky, thinking of that one love of her life who had taken all the sunshine out of her young heart, who had widowed it for ever.

She was thinking she would be always true to this man whom she loathed—always true—that was his right.

"And perhaps Heaven will let me die soon," she thought.

The shrinking coldness of his future bride only whetted his passion to quicker ardour, and made him resolve to keep her to her promise.

CHAPTER VIII.

AND LAST.

At length Jessie's wedding-day dawned upon the fairest, but the most miserable of brides.

"For Heaven's sake smile, blush, seem happy. Jessie, what will the people think?" exclaimed Lady Easton, who was getting impatient at the cold, passive girl.

"I do my best," answered Jessie. "And this is my bridal morning," she murmured bitterly, "would that I could enter my coffin instead of his arms."

At this moment Emily rushed into the room with flushed cheeks and eyes sparkling like living coals.

"What is the matter, tell me quick?" screamed the bride.

"A—telegram from—from Harry," she cried; "he is coming here, and—and somebody else. Oh! I am so happy! so happy!" and "little minx" began to weep to testify her joy.

"I congratulate you, dear Emily, upon your happiness. You at least will have a truly joyous day."

"I should be more than happy, darling coz, though, if you were able to smile and look your dear self again."

"That can never be in this world. I have sold myself to this man to please the whim of our uncle. May he never repeat it."

She now placed herself in the hands of her maid to be dressed for the ceremony.

Jewels of the rarest water, the bridegroom's wedding gift, adorned her head, her arms, her neck.

Sleepless nights and emotion subdued had given an unusual flush to her cheeks.

The glistening white satin and rare lace robes was scarcely whiter than her skin.

The jewels about her beautiful throat trembled and flashed like molten flame.

"All London will say you are the loveliest bride of the season," exclaimed Lady Easton, in an ecstasy of admiration.

She flushed deeply, as she saw her form in the mirror.

A vague dread, a sense of apprehension that she could not have explained—a presentiment was upon her, making her temples throb, her head swim, her lips feel light as air.

Yet a delightful expectation came over her also.

She could not define or analyse her feelings.

Her heart was sick, yet it beat fast. Was it possible that the veil of the future was raised at that supreme moment to comfort her sinking heart?

At all events, she seemed brighter and calmer.

She was ready at last.

When she entered the drawing-room she looked like a peerless vision.

Her uncle clasped her tenderly, and kissed her with moist eyes.

The bridegroom now arrived; his step was light, a flush of happiness was on his face.

"Come, my queen of beauty, it is time we were at the church," he said, as he led her down to the carriage of her uncle, followed by a bevy of fair young bridesmaids, and leaving her in his charge till they arrived at the altar.

She drew about her a cloak of white feathers as she entered the carriage, as if shivering with cold.

"Heaven itself cannot help me now," she thought, with a bitterness of resignation that was more hopeless than that of the martyrs of old.

And society had set its seal of approval upon this union, and upon all such unions, and deemed them sanctified.

Year after year pretty, rosy, golden-haired daughters of fair mothers are taught to hold no other aim in life better than an advantageous marriage.

Whosoever achieves such is blessed!

As the last carriage drove from Cromwell-gate a hansom cab, which contained two gentlemen, stopped suddenly before the mansion.

Dashing out of the cab, and making a few breathless, hasty inquiries they sprang in, and ordered the man to drive, for dear life, to St. Peter's, Eaton-square.

"Twenty pounds, my man, if you arrive in time!"

The travellers were Harry Tilley and Gerald Bolitho.

The marriage ceremony had commenced; the clergyman was asking in clear, sonorous tones the usual formula,—

"If there be anyone here who knoweth why these two persons should not be joined together in holy matrimony I charge him to speak, or—"

"Yes, stop! I beseech you!" was shouted at the door of the church, as a bronzed but handsome man rushed madly up to the bridal group.

"What means this sacrilegious outrage?" exclaimed Sir Edward Beaumont.

"It means, sir, that I was thought dead, and that lady is my betrothed!"

The bride gave one look, staggered back, and would have fallen, but she was caught in the strong arms of Gerald Bolitho.

She had fainted.

The wedding party was broken up—all was confusion.

"Explain this unseemly scene, sir," exclaimed the infatuated bridegroom.

"I can only say we thought that man dead, and from my heart of hearts I wish he was," returned the Commodore.

Everything was soon explained concerning Gerald.

He had been seriously wounded, and left to die on the battlefield, but a Boer to whom he had been kind to found him, and nursed him back to life, but his name had been placed on the roll of killed.

On rejoining the British forces he met Harry, and hearing from him, through Emily, that Jessie was about to become a wife re-

turned with him to England just in time to prevent the hateful sacrifice.

Three months have passed, and a pretty wedding procession is just coming out of St. George's Church, Hanover-square.

The brides are both beautiful, and are wreathed with smiles and blushes.

As they take their bridegrooms' arms a true English cheer bursts from the group of spectators who have assembled to witness the alluring scene.

Jessie has signed her name as Edale for the last time, and is now Mrs. Bolitho.

The "minx" is just as happy, and promises her husband that she never intends to masquerade again in his clothes.

Jessie is the happiest of wives, sorrow having hallowed present joy, for she has obtained the "King of her Heart."

[THE END.]

LOVERS OF CHILDREN.

Many great men have delighted in passing their hours of relaxation in the company of children. This befriends a pure and loving nature. Richter says the man is to be shunned who does not love the society of children.

Henry IV. was passionately fond of them, and delighted in their gambols and caprices. One day, when crawling around his room on his hands and knees, with the dauphin on his back and the other children about him urging the king to gallop in imitation of a horse, an ambassador suddenly entered and surprised the royal family in the midst of their fun.

Henry, without rising to his feet, asked,—

"Have you children, M. Ambassador?"

"Yes, sire."

"In that case, I proceed with the sport," remarked the king.

Napoleon used to take the infant King of Rome in his arms, and standing in front of a mirror with him, there make the oddest grimaces in the glass. At breakfast he would take the child upon his knee, dip his fingers in the sauce, and dab his face with it.

The child's governess scolded, the emperor laughed, and the child, almost always pleased, appeared to delight in the rough caresses of his father. Those who, on such occasions, had a favour to solicit from the emperor, were almost always sure of being favourably received.

Cato, the censor, no matter howsoever urgent the business of the republic, would never leave his home without first having seen his wife wash and dress the baby.

Cicero, after having put the finishing hand to his orations, called in the children and had a joyous romp with them.

A great diversion of the Emperor Augustus was to play at games with little children, who were brought from all parts for this purpose, Moorish and Syrian children being his favourites. There was one little fellow of the name of Nucius, who stood only two feet high and weighed only seventeen pounds, but who nevertheless had a prodigious voice; he was an especial favourite.

Rousseau said that nothing gave him greater pleasure than to see little children making fun and playing together.

"I have often," says he, "stopped in the streets to watch their frolics and sports with an interest which I see no other person take in them."

Yet, inconceivable inconsistency! Rousseau sent his own children to a foundling hospital and never owned them.

A ship on the broad, boisterous and open ocean, needeth no pilot. But it dare not venture alone on the placid bosom of a little river, lest it be wrecked by some hidden rock. Thus it is with life. 'Tis not in our open, exposed deeds that we so much need the still voice of the silent monitor, as in the small secret, every-day acts of our life.

OUTWITTED.

"Nor for gold—I will not sell myself to any woman!"

The speaker, Austyn Stair, was a young man, just twenty-five, who had left college long enough to secure a good start at the Bar. He had just had an interview with his father about the usual millionaire's *bête noir*—matrimony.

"Not for gold, Austyn!" replied his father. "I never asked you to *sell yourself*, and I wish you would not put such a meaning to my language."

"It amounts to the same thing, father. You wish cousin Alice Graham and me to marry because she is rich; and I do not love her except as my very dear cousin—ay, a sister—and I am sure she has no deeper love for me."

"That's all nonsense," replied the piqued father. "Your uncle and I decided, when you were children, that you and Alice should grow up and marry, thus keeping the two old families together."

"But, father, neither she nor I desires this. If she has set her heart on it and expects it I will consent, though it were to kill me."

"There—that will do! I know what you would say. But, know you, sir, that if you marry anyone else but your cousin Alice without my consent you will not have one shilling of my money!" And the old gentleman left the room in a fit of anger.

After pacing up and down an hour or two, Austyn happened to pass by the library and saw it open. He walked in to get a book, when he saw the following letter lying on the table, open :

"The Priory, Herts.

"DEAR HOWARD,—I now, for the first time since we left college, thirty years ago, accept your invitation. I do not come, but send. I'll be frank and brief. I want my son and his cousin to marry. With the usual rebellion of young people, they do not like the arrangement. I will send my niece, accompanied by a lady friend to keep her company in your bachelor's retreat, and they will pay you a few months' visit. In a few days my son Austyn will follow. See that he does not become acquainted with any susceptible girls there, and—well, you understand. You can have a wedding from your house if you will arrange for one. My son will not know where Alice is gone.—Your old friend,
"AUSTYN."

"W-h-e-e-w!" whistled the young man. "Oho! that's it, is it! Let me see—I think I can counteract that plot. Alice will help me, for she is as anxious as I to get out of this hateful marriage. Yes, I have it—ha, ha, ha! Well see how this works."

He sat down and wrote to his cousin all about the old gentlemen's scheme, and added :

"Now, you go down there, and take as your lady friend Miss Maude Felton. The governor need not know whom you take; tell him you will be met at the station by an old school-fellow. This will be true. And do not let Maude know anything of this. Tell her she need not, and all that."

In a few day's Austyn's father called him and said,—

"Austyn, you have often heard me speak of my old friend, General Howard?"

"Oh, yes, sir; many times."

"Well, I thought I would get you to visit him for me. How would you like it?"

"I should like it very well just now."

"I am glad to hear it; and I hope while you are gone that you will try to comply with my wish, and get over your fancy for that Felton girl."

"Father, I have never disobeyed you yet, and I promise never to marry while you live without your consent. But I beg of you not to speak lightly of Miss Felton in my presence. She is one of the prettiest and sweetest women ever m—

you have more than once

been forced to acknowledge her superior mind and learning."

"She's very smart and pretty, which is the very reason I want you to go. But never mind. Wait till you come back."

The day Austyn left—just five days after his father received a letter from Alice, telling of her safe arrival and delight—the old gentleman chucked inwardly to think how he had outwitted the young people, in spite of the old belief that two loving hearts can outscheme a multitude of opposers.

Alice had arranged with Maude to accompany her to a friend's, not telling her anything further.

While on the road she said,—

"Maude, dear, what is your second name? I know it begins with 'A.'"

"It is the same as yours—Alice."

"Why, how fortunate—strange, I mean! We can have lots of fun. If Austyn comes you be Cousin Alice, and I will be the lady friend, and go by my second name—Rose. You see, I never saw uncle's friend, and he does not know my name, as uncle simply wrote that Alice was coming. Now, if you leave it to me, you will not have to dissemble at all. I will call you Alice Trevelyan. Cousin Reginald will call you Alice, and me Rose."

And thus, after a great deal of protesting from Maude, the matter was settled.

When the young people had been at Eagle's Nest, as the general called his place, about nine weeks, General Howard found Rose alone in the parlour one evening, and said,—

"Miss Rose, I do not know whether I should speak of my feelings toward you or not; but you can guess, you know what I would say. Shall I say it?"

A crimson flush and a downward glance spoke the answer.

"I believe I read hope in your silence—or pity. Well, I am an old man, and am blunt and rough. I have never met a woman who has moved me as you have since my mother joined the angels. I love you, Rose—love you dearly. I would make you my wife. Will you love me—marry me?"

Slowly she raised her eyes to his, rose from her chair, stepped quickly to his side, and said, in a voice not excited, but full of a calm assurance of perfect trust,—

"Give you my love, I cannot—it has been yours, for, lo! these many weeks. Marry you—yes, to-morrow, if you should say so."

Instantly he had imprinted a fervent kiss upon her forehead, and held her face in his hands an instant, and said,—

"To-morrow, if I say so? Be it so, then—I say it. And your friends, Alice and Austyn—are you in their secrets?"

"Yes. But Austyn cannot marry without his father's consent, on pain of being disinherited."

"Oh, he'll get that quick enough. I'll telegraph right away for it."

"General—dear Frank—if you will let me write that telegram, so as to surprise me—I mean Sir Austyn Stair, I'll tell you a secret."

"Very well. Write away."

"But you will not be angry with me for it, if I have practised a little deceit—provided you think that deception has done you any good?"

"Why, how my little girl talks! Of course I shall not get angry. But let us see the telegram."

He read :

"Send your consent for Austyn to marry Alice, and me to marry Rose. A double wedding—both gone."

"Ha, ha, ha! that is very good, little one. It will surprise him. Now for that secret."

"Wait till the answer comes, and I give it to Alice and her lover."

In two hours the following telegram was handed in, directed to General Howard:—

"Well done! Austyn has my consent to marry Alice, and you can have Rose."

"Now, Frank, my secret is this: I have made you believe that Alice was Austyn's cousin. She is the very young lady his father

sent him here to avoid. His real cousin knew of our coming, and was willing."

"And I have aided the enemy instead of my own side? Good gracious! but won't I catch it! However, it cannot be helped. So as we do not want any great to-do, and Austyn has his father's consent, which I have just given him, we will marry to-morrow."

Austyn was as much astonished as any one at the turn affairs had taken; and more so when he found that his cousin insisted upon the general not being informed who she really was.

"I told him your real cousin knew of this, and helped us to come."

"Well, you're a tramp at playing; but how in the mischief you are going to get out of this I can't see."

"Wait, and you will," was all the answer she gave.

The marriages took place by special license as arranged, and as the two couples were standing ready to step into their carriages for the honeymoon, a fine-looking old gentleman entered the room, crying—

"Why, Frank, old fellow, how are you? And this is my old college chum, who could not be outwitted by a woman so as to be grappled into marriage, eh? And, Alice, my love, you and Austyn have—"

"Are you not going to allow me to present my wife, old friend?"

"Certainly; I was just going up to speak to her."

"But this is Mrs. Howard—my wife!"

"This, my niece, your wife! I thought—that—Austyn, who in the—well—I—explain yourselves!" said the baronet, his face turning pale.

Rose burst into tears, and Maude, as she was known to Austyn's father, looked imploringly into first her husband's, and then into Alice's face, and Rose—or Alice proper—said,—

"Oh! uncle—dearest Frank, forgive me! It was all a plot and a counterplot. Only love won!"

And then she explained it all, while the elder Austyn first swore and then apologized and laughed.

"And, my darling husband, I did not tell you I was the real cousin, because I wanted uncle to see that you, his trusted friend, did not plot against him."

Austyn's father acknowledged himself beaten, and gave in with a good grace; especially, as he said, his consent was given willingly for Austyn to marry Alice, which he did.

W. W.

SAVED BY A WOMAN.

Crack, crack, crack!

One of the horses dead! The driver tumbles down from his seat, a second later followed by an outside passenger.

The crash of glass, flying splinters, the shrill whistle of rifle balls! Over and above all, the unearthly yell of the savages! Taken prisoners by the Maoris, Charlie and Harry Stuart, known on theatrical posters as "the Rubino Brothers;" "Mademoiselle Elaine, Queen of the Floating Wire," in private life Mrs. Charlie Stuart; "Il Tesoro, the child-wonder;" in fact, little Charlie. Dead—the driver and two passengers.

The Rubino Brothers, Mademoiselle Elaine, and Il Tesoro were en route to fill an engagement in Canterbury, New Zealand, just then assuming importance.

The prisoners were tied upon the coach-horses, and hurried some ten or fifteen miles away. When night approached a green spot was selected by a running stream, and the party encamped.

Words fail to portray the anxieties, the agonies of the prisoners. When the fire was built the victims imagined a fiery death; when the chiefs touched their knives, or so much as turned to look at their captives, it seemed as

if they were experiencing in advance the delights of torturing them to their hearts' content.

The Maories were altogether different from the noble savages they have been so persistently described. They were probably among the lowest of their own people, and took advantage of the war then going on to commit all sorts of outrages.

Poor little woman! How she reproached herself in an agony of tears! for she it was who urged the acceptance of this engagement. The salary, which was something wonderful in figures, was to be paid in gold.

Its dazzling light blinded poor Nora, to the risk of which they had spoken, and at which they laughed; the salary which would go so far towards paying for the little home they meant to buy, and for which they had been hoarding ever since their boy was born.

"Great heavens, Harry! what are we to do? These demons mean to torture us. See, they are collecting wood for the purpose! My wife and child may be saved for a worse fate!"

"It would have been much better for us all to be lying on the road, stiff and stark like those other poor fellows!"

"I tell you what, Harry, I mean to give them trouble yet."

"What can we do, Charlie? Our hands are tied, and wherever we go we are guarded."

The two men relapsed into gloomy silence.

For some time the savages amused themselves over the wardrobe of the show-people. Especially were they delighted with the stage jewellery, and the fluffy skirts in which the "Queen of the Floating Wire" appeared in public.

The "tights" belonging to the Rubino Brothers, however, occasioned much wonderment. Over these they gesticulated and vociferated as they were passed from hand to hand.

Presently, a couple of the chiefs brought the garments forward, and reeled off words, the purport of which the brothers might not have fathomed, had the gestures been omitted. It was evident they asked an explanation of the uses or merits of the singular affairs.

"I say, Harry," spoke up Charlie, quickly, "they want to know what these tights are for. If we can only persuade them to allow us to do some stage business, it may save our lives a day or two."

"Or they may take us for medicine-men," answered Harry. "If we get our hands free, we may escape somehow."

With this idea in their minds they went through a great amount of pantomimic dialogue, and succeeded in conveying some ideas into the brains of their dusky captors, which resulted in their being released, still carefully guarded, however.

They swung the trapeze from the bough of a huge tree—performers on this contrivance always carrying the necessary ropes and bars with them.

The savages watched every movement with the deepest interest, their curiosity increasing with every moment.

Charlie managed to exchange a few words with his wife, and was glad to find she had her hands free.

"Nora, when you see these fellows looking their eyes out, take the boy and slip away. Follow that star, and you will strike some town before long."

"And leave you, my husband? Never! We can die together."

"You must fly, my darling! A worse fate than death awaits you. Oh, Nora, do not hesitate! We will keep them interested as long as we can. You must hasten away with all your might. I would plunge a knife in your heart myself rather than leave you to the mercy of these worse than brutes."

"Come on, Charlie!" shouted Harry. "They are impatient."

Charlie, with a whispered "Good-bye! Heaven keep you safe!" left his wife. His bosom throbbed with wild emotion as he thought of the terrible strait in which they

were placed, and wondered if he would ever see the dearly-loved partner of his joys and sorrows, or ever again fondle the second edition of himself.

It was a curious sight, certainly, the like of which the huge trees about them never before witnessed.

The dozen of hideous Maories were gathered about the fire, whose red flames lined the dark shadows of the night with a crimson glow, and transmuted the overhanging foliage seemingly into the cunning work of the silver or goldsmith.

The Rubino Brothers had performed before many audiences in England, in Australia, and in New Zealand, but never were they so anxious to excel as on this occasion. Pride in their skill, the wish to astonish the blood-thirsty audience, and the thought of the woman and child they would save, conspired to stimulate them.

As they sprang from the bushes before the crowd, a murmur of surprise and admiration came from the savage warriors.

For a moment the acrobats stood like marble statues, saving alone the embroidered skirt about their waist and the little bracelet which ornamented the wrist.

In the eyes of their dusky audience they looked like gods—like beings from another world. Both men were models of physical beauty, and the light from the blazing flame wreaths added to the glamour.

The half-audible expression of wondering approbation reached their ears and nerve them for the task. Charlie cast a fond look in the direction of his wife and child. A shiver ran through his heart as he asked,—

"Shall I ever see them again?"

He looked again, resolving to make it the last. He feared to repeat it, for the sight and his thoughts might unman him at some critical moment. He turned away, choking down his agony.

Hand in hand the brothers advanced, until directly beneath the trapeze. With a bow as graceful and profound as they would have bestowed upon a London audience, they took their places on the bar.

Nora and the child were seated in the shadow, not far distant, and in full view of the trapeze. The savages reclined on the ground between her and the fire.

She was tortured between the salvation of her child and the desertion of her dearly-loved husband. She could not decide the question: strive as she would, she could not summon resolution sufficient to leave Charlie to his fate.

When she thought of that, which was more cruel than death, she dare not stay. If she could but yield her own life, and save her husband and her child, how willingly, she thought, she would go to her death.

The performances began. As the brothers passed from the simpler feats to those more astonishing, the applause grew more and more vehement among the savages.

A sensation the like of this they had never known. Feats of activity and strength appeal with irresistible force to the wild men, and create a respect and veneration where the higher qualities of mind would fail entirely.

Most eagerly they devoured the swift contortions of the agile acrobats, as their shapely white limbs flashed in and out the ropes, now hanging from the bar, or swinging through the air.

It was wonderful! amazing! Their vocabulary of gutturals was exhausted in the vain effort to do justice to the performance.

Conscious of the sensation they created the brothers, during brief intervals of rest, were busily employed in devising some plan to take advantage of it.

Charlie hoped that Nora and the boy, ere this had found a propitious moment to steal unobserved from the camp; but it was impossible to be sure of it.

He expected every minute to hear the shout, which would follow the announcement of her escape. He knew they could not continue

their exertions much longer. Already the felt the strain and fatigue which must soon be followed by utter exhaustion.

"Shall we cut and run for it, Charlie? I cannot keep the mill a-going much longer," whispered Harry.

There was no answer to the question, for the next instant the Maories were upon their feet, scrambling like mad towards their horses and giving vent to exclamations of fear.

Heaven, it seemed, interposed to rescue the prisoners.

Lurid balls of green and of red fire fell flying among the retreating host.

Was it some curious electrical phenomenon, with a special vengeance for their cruel foes? for the flaming balls followed them alone.

Several times they flashed quite near the dismayed savages, and succeeded in filling their souls with infinite terror, and the air with agonising yells.

It seemed but an instant before the hoof-beats began to sound more like echoes than realities, telling how rapidly the discomfited Maories were putting grass between them and a haunted camp.

The acrobats themselves were startled, and knew not what to make of it, until a woman's laugh was heard.

Nora Stuart sprang into her husband's arms, and, with a woman's inconsistency, exchanged the laugh for sobbing explanations.

"I couldn't leave you, Charlie, to die—I couldn't! And when I happened to think of that package of stage bombs which we brought with us for one of our acts I knew what to do. I found them, fortunately, without trouble, and fired them right among the crowd. I never saw a house cleared out so quick before—did you?"

But it was not the time to discuss the subject.

In the flight and frenzy of the foe's retreat, they stopped not to think of plunder or prisoners, hence the coach-horses remained to carry the whilom captives to a small settlement, where they arrived the next afternoon.

From thence they made their way on to Canterbury, and eventually returned to Melbourne, resolved to avoid the regions frequented by "practical" savages.

W. W. J.

BLAZE AWAY!

A hunter with an empty game-bag enters a country tavern at nightfall, and with an air of gloom bids the host serve him with a glass of wine. While he is drinking it the host remarks, confidentially:

"You had bad luck to-day, I'm afraid?"

"Yes, my friend; I did not bag a single thing. The first time such a thing has happened to me in the course of my life." (Sportsman's perjury at which Jove laughs.)

"Well, if you are anxious to take something home. I have a hare out in the stable that I would not mind parting with to you for a crown."

"A hare? Dead?"

"No; alive. I caught it yesterday."

"I'll take it."

The landlord leads the hunter out into the yard, receives the five shillings, and brings out the hare, which he ties to a stake by a cord fastened to its foot.

"Now, sir, blaze away!"

The sportsman retires a few paces, brings his gun to his shoulder, and blazes away; and the charge takes effect in the cord, and the hare bounds lightly over the fence and disappears into the azure distance!

DAINTY-LOOKING cups of coffee were handed round the dress circle between the acts at one of the fashionable West end London theatres a few nights ago.

A VIGOROUS effort is to be made in the Temple Gardens to create a bit of rurality with regard to trees, groves, thickets, flower parterres, and so forth. The spirit moveth the lawyers, but we hope they have not backed out of the promised balls in the Middle Temple Hall.

FACETLE.

"CHARLEY," said one little fellow to another, "we are going to have a cupola on our house."—"Pah! that's nothing," rejoined the other, "papa's going to get a mortgage on ours."

"I wish I had been born a Frenchman," quoth a young thirsker after knowledge to his parent—"And why, my boy?"—"Because then I should know another language."

"WHAT a boor your new schoolmaster is, said a lady to one of the schoolboys; "don't you think so?"—"Yes, a ba-boon," was the reply.

A PERSON who was sent to prison for marrying two wives excused himself by saying that when he had one she fought him, but when he had two they fought each other.

THERE!" said Jones, as he wrathfully pushed away the pie which his landlady had just served him; "the stuff isn't fit for a pig to eat, and I ain't going to eat it."

"I SAW a capital thing in your pamphlet the other day," said a cynic to his friend—"Indeed!" said the delighted author; "what was that?"—"A pound of butter!" was the cruel reply.

SCIENTIFIC men can tell us within a few million years the age of the earth, astronomers have weighed the sun, but the man isn't born yet who can tell why a tailor will charge as much for a suit for a little man as for a big one.

EXTRACT from a letter written by one of the pupils at a young ladies' boarding school to her father:—"And lastly, dears papa, I must tell you that the young gentlemen in this neighbourhood use bear's grease on their hair to such an extent that all the girls wear oil silk capes. I wish you would tell me to buy me one as soon as she can."

IT IS A PROGRESSIVE AGE.—The boulevards of Paris are infested with deaf-and-dumb beggars, more or less authentic, who distribute printed papers describing their misfortune to persons seated outside the cafés. One of these prospectuses, after soliciting the public to buy a copy of a deaf-and-dumb alphabet, bears as a postscript the words "English spoken."

CONJUGAL AMENITIES.—Wife: "I saw Mrs. Boodle this morning, and she complained that on the occasion of her last visit you were so rude to her that she thought she must have offended you."—Husband: "Nothing of the kind; on the contrary, I like her very much; but it was rather dark at the time, and, when I entered the room, I thought at first that it was you."

WHY SHE WANTED TO SAVE HIM.—During a quarrel, a short time back, a woman rushed between the combatants, and throwing herself before one of them, exclaimed to the other, "Don't shoot, oh, please don't shoot him!"—Greatly affected, the foot lowered his revolver and asked, in tremulous tones, "Are you his sweetheart, wife, or sister?"—"No," answered the peacemaker, "but this man has a room at my house and owes me three weeks' rent."

REAL DOSSET.—A board of guardians in Dorsetshire the other week discussed the question whether or not representatives of the Press should be admitted to their meetings. The guardians object to their profound utterances being made public, and one of them declared, with an emphatic thump of the buccolic fist, "We don't want them 'ere short-horn writers here!"

THE most candid young man in town called at the office of a wealthy citizen, and said:—"I want to marry your daughter. I can't live without her."—"Are you acquainted with my daughter?"—"Not in the least."—"How, then, do you know that you can't live without her?"—"Well, I heard you were going to give her lots of money when she married, and my personal expenses are so heavy I can't live without her—or some other woman who has got money to support a husband."

OUR leading colleges bestow scholarships on their graduates.

THE undertaker can stand no trifling. He wants everything dead in earnest.

"Your language is wholly uncalled for," as the publishers told the author whose works failed to sell.

WHEN an obituary notice ends, "No further seek his frailties to disclose," it means, "Whisky killed him."

THE mouthpiece of the telephone may be perfectly respectable, but there are a great many things said against it.

THE *Lancet* says that a moderate use of tobacco is not injurious. By moderate, not enough to hurt in meat, and the opinion is a remarkably wise one for a doctor.

A GOOD old Quaker lady, after listening to the extravagant yarns of a person as long as her patience would allow, said to him: "Friend, what a pity it is a sin to lie, when it seems so necessary to your happiness!"

A GENTLEMAN who, in a public meeting, was telling that he was eighty-one years old and had not been an abstainer from liquors, was interrupted by this remark, "You would have been a hundred by this time if you had."

"WHAT pretty children, and how much they look alike!" said C—, during a first visit to a friend's house. "They are twins," his friend explains. "What, both of 'em!" exclaims C—, greatly interested.

"SOMETIMES," remarked Fogg, removing his cigar, "I wish that I had never been born, or that I had died in childhood." He puffed away for a moment or two, and then added, with something like his customary cheerfulness: "Well, I have not altogether lived in vain. I have made a fairly good husband for Mrs. F—, a woman who never could have got anybody else to marry her."

A LITTLE girl who had not behaved properly at church criticised, upon her return, the dress of a lady who was there, saying that it had a tuck very near the hem; when her mother said, reprovingly, "I should think you would have been so ashamed of your bad conduct that you could not have raised your eyes from the floor." "So I was, ma," was the ready answer; "and having my eyes cast down caused me to observe the bottom of Mrs. R.'s dress."

"WHAT have you that's good?" said a hungry traveller, as he seated himself at table d'hôte at a Salt Lake City hotel. "Oh," said the waiter, "we've roast beef, roast mutton, roast pork, and broiled curlews." "What's a curlew?" said the traveller. "Why, a bird—something like a snipe." "Could it fly?" "Yes." "Did it have wings?" "Yes." "Then I don't want any curlew. Any thing that had wings and could fly, and didn't leave this country, I don't want for my dinner."

"YOU mustn't touch the top of the baby's head," said a mother to her little four-year-old, "she has a soft spot there that is very tender. The youngster gazed at it curiously for a moment, then asked: "Do all babies have soft spots on their heads?"—"Yes."—"Did papahave a soft spot on the top of his head when he was a baby?"—"Yes," replied the mother with a sigh, "and he has got it yet."—And the old man, who had overheard the conversation from an adjoining room, sang out: "Yes, indeed he has, my dear boy, or he would be a single man to-day."

THE Comtesse de C., who regrets her young days, conceals her age as much as possible. Not only does she have recourse to all the contrivances of art, but each winter she calls herself one year younger than the preceding year. She betrayed herself, however, at the opera the other evening by one of those expressions which are so common. Meeting Madam B. the Comtesse said to her: "Ah, how are you! It is a century since I have seen you." "You see," said one of her friends to another, in a low tone, "she acknowledges her age now!"

THERE are giantesses out in Minnesota, it seems. A local paper there, in describing the burning of a dwelling mentions the rescue, "by way of a window, of the servant girl fifteen feet in height."

FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE.—An elderly dandy, who was more noted for running into debt than paying his tradesmen, made an exception in favour of his wig-maker, that he might be enabled to say that he wore his own hair.

A POST was once walking with Talleyrand in the street, and at the same time reciting some of his own verses. Talleyrand perceived, at a short distance, a man yawning and pointing him out to his friend, said: "Not so loud—he hears you."

WALPOLE relates, after an execution of eighteen malefactors, a woman was hawking on account of them, but called them nineteen. A gentleman said to her, "Why do you say nineteen? There were but eighteen hanged." She replied, "Sir, I did not know that you had been reprieved."

"ANYTHING new or fresh this morning?" a reporter asked in a railway office. "Yes," replied the lone occupant of the apartment. "What is it?" asked the reporter, eagerly whipping out his notebook. "That paint you are leaning against." That railway man is now in the hospital, and that reporter is in gaol.

EXCITED wife (to her husband): "Do you not admit that woman has a mission?"—Cool Husband: "Yes, my dear, she has—submission." Great confusion in the domestic circle, and the husband calls on the family surgeon for a plaster for his head, "wounded by accidentally hitting it against the edge of an open door."

SLIGHTLY DEAF.—The most appalling case of deafness that we ever came across outside of an asylum was that of an old lady who lives across the street from the arsenal yard. On a royal birthday they fired a salute of twenty-one guns. The old lady was observed to start and listen as the last gun was fired, and then she exclaimed, "Come in!"

A CLAW UNDER THE VELVET.—Miss Swarthyngton had been to the fair, where she had her silhouette taken. "What do you think of my picture?" she asked, handing it to Mrs. Planetung. "The profile is good," replied Mrs. P.; "but don't you think it a little too dark?" Miss Swarthyngton smiled, but was afterwards heard to mutter: "A little too dark! The hateful old thing!"

A FAIR and buxom widow, who has buried three husbands, recently went with a gentleman who, in his younger days, had paid her marked attention to inspect the graves of her dear departed. After contemplating them in mournful silence, she murmured to her companion: "Ah! James, you might have been in that row now if you had only had a little more courage."

"PATRICK," said an Irish gentleman to his servant one morning, "I heard last night from undoubted authority that you have had the audacity to go and tell some people that I was a shabby old rascal, a mean fellow, and anything but a gentleman. I am told that these were your exact words."—"Bedad, sor," replied Pat, "and it's there you're quite wrong; I can assure you, sor, that I don't tell my private thoughts to any man."

A GENTLEMAN riding in Suffolk met a youth engaged in minding pigs. The horseman reined in his steed, and inquired where the main road led to.—"Nowhere," replied the boy.—"Indeed!" said the gentleman. "How can that be?"—"Well, I've lived here a good while," answered the youth, "and it never led me anywhere yet."—"Who's your master, my boy?"—"That old sow over yonder, for I can't do nothing with her," replied the youth, pointing to an unruly member of his herd, and turning his back on his questioner, thus putting an end to the conversation.

SOCIETY.

We are assured, says a correspondent at Mentone, that the Queen will arrive there in March, and will take up her residence at the Palazzo Orango, La Mortola, belonging to Mr. Thomas Hanbury, who is at present in Italy.

Her Majesty has commissioned a Glasgow firm to make an ornament respecting a sphinx, the base of the design being composed of onyx. This is intended as a gift to the Duke of Connaught, and to mark Her Majesty's recognition and appreciation of the service in Egypt of his Royal Highness.

The Princess Louise has sent home some beautiful sketches done by her during her trip through the United States. She is a most indefatigable artist, herself and her sketch-book being inseparable. Her natural talent, now cultivated by constant practice, turns out in the course of a year an enormous number of sketches, some of them of considerable value.

At a ball given by the Earl and Countess of Stradbroke, at Henham Hall, a *chef d'œuvre* of the culinary art was set before the guests. In the centre of the table a huge boar's head was placed on a stand of large dimensions composed of white wax, at each end of which was a classic female figure supporting wreaths of flowers, and on the front were monograms surmounted with the earl's crest and coronet and other devices.

A large children's party was recently given in Lowndes-square by Prince Hassan and Prince Ibrahim, brothers of the Khedive of Egypt, who provided innumerable entertainments for their young guests, including a magnificent Christmas-tree, which was bowed down with the weight of presents, many of considerable value and beauty. This tree was lit by gas, and caused much sensation among the party, which included many grown-up visitors.

LADY GIFFARD, as Marie Antoinette, was exceedingly admired at the Mansion House fancy dress ball the other week. She wore a lovely dress in blue velvet, bordered round with sable tails, opening over a petticoat of cream satin brocaded in soft colourings, trimmed with two bands of sable tails, the velvet corsage being ornamented with a fichu of old point d'Alençon fastened with diamond sprays; a cap of blue velvet with white feathers and aigrettes, arranged with a large point d'Alençon veil, completed this very successful and becoming costume.

The Crown Princess, at the celebration of the Silver Wedding at Berlin, wore an exquisite robe of wonderful pearly green silk, ornamented with antique silver lace; but when the religious celebration of the Silver Wedding took place the Princess wore a bridal dress composed entirely of white and silver, consisting of train and corsage of richest white satin embossed in silver, with bouquets of wild roses, lined throughout with white satin, and trimmed with white swan feather trimming, finished with plumes of ostrich feathers tipped with silver. Petticoat of cloth of silver and richest white satin duchesse, trimmed with silver lace, and finished with plumes of ostrich feathers to correspond with train.

A FASHIONABLE and pretty wedding was that of Miss Crawley, of Stockwood Park, Luton, with Mr. R. Marcus Brooke, eldest son of Sir R. and the late Lady Brooke, which recently took place. The bride wore bodice, train, and paniers of white broché silk over a skirt of white satin, trimmed with fine antique Brussels lace and pearl passementerie. A spray of orange blossoms, with tulle veil, was fastened to the hair with diamond stars. The five bridesmaids wore white corded silk trimmed with cream lace, green velvet toques also trimmed with lace and feathers, and shoulder knots of green velvet. Each wore a pearl and turquoise arrow brooch, the gift of the bridegroom.

STATISTICS.

THE BLIND IN FRANCE.—It is estimated that there are about 28,000 blind persons in France, and comparatively little has been done for them. Some 400 blind children receive professional education, half of them in the National Institution for Blind Youth, and the other half in a few charitable establishments, due to private initiative. The Hospice National des Quinze-Vingts maintains 300 pensioners and distributes some aid to others; but at least 27,000 blind are without resource.

The number of calls for fires, or supposed fires, received during last year has been 2,341. Of these 254 were false alarms, 161 proved to be only chimney alarms, and 1,926 were calls for fires, of which 164 resulted in serious damage, and 1,762 in slight damage. The fires of 1882, compared with those of 1881, show a decrease of 65, and compared with the average of the last ten years, an increase of 272. The number of fires in the metropolis in which life has been seriously endangered during the year 1882 has been 108, and the number of these in which life has been lost has been 34. The number of persons seriously endangered by fire has been 175, of whom 139 were saved, and 36 lost their lives.

GEMS.

ADMIRATION is a forced tribute, and to extort it from mankind, envious and ignorant as they are, they must be taken unawares.

NATURE has given us two ears and but one tongue, in order that we may repeat but one-half of what we hear.

WHAT makes many persons discontented with their own condition is the absurd idea they form of the happiness of others.

THERE is no rule more invariable than that we are paid for our suspicions by finding what we suspect.

THERE are few things reason can discover with so much certainty and ease as its own insufficiency.

ALL the knowledge we mortals can acquire is not knowledge positive, but knowledge comparative, and subject to the errors and passions of humanity.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

FRIED OYSTERS AND SCALLOPS.—Wash or wipe, season and drain. Dry in a towel. Dip in crumbs, egg and crumbs. Fry one minute in hot fat. Drain; garnish with pickles.

BREADED CHOPS.—Wipe, trim, season with salt and pepper, dip in seasoned crumbs, egg and crumbs, fry four or five minutes in hot fat. Drain, and serve with tomato sauce.

FRIED POTATOES.—Pare, cut in the desired shape, soak in cold salted water, drain, dry between a folded towel; fry in clear fat, hot enough to brown, while counting sixty; drain and salt.

BOILED EGGS.—Boil eggs twenty to thirty minutes for any receipt where hard-boiled eggs are used. Boil from three to four minutes if liked soft. Or pour on boiling water and cover closely; keep hot, but not boil, for ten minutes.

BUTTER CUSTARD.—Boil one pint milk. Beat yolks of three eggs, add one-half cup sugar and one saltspoonful salt. Pour the boiling milk on eggs, cook in double-boiler till it thickens like cream, stirring constantly. Strain. When cool, add one-half teaspoonful vanilla. Beat whites of three eggs stiff. Scald over a sieve, drain, and pile them lightly on the custard. Garnish with bits of jelly on the white.

MISCELLANEOUS.

On the 12th of February the hairdressers of London intend to hold "a grand fancy ball." No such ball has ever yet taken place in England. The head of each barber will be a specimen of the owner's skill, and the sight of all the heads in the ball-room will, a hairdresser declares, be proof positive "that the gentlemen in the profession in London form the most skilled and tasteful artists in the world."

MIND LITTLE THINGS.—Springs are little things, but they are sources of large streams; a helm is a little thing, but it governs the course of a ship; nails and pegs are little things, but they hold the parts of large buildings together; a word, a look, a smile, are little things, but powerful for good or evil. Think of this, and mind the little things. Pay that little debt; if it is a promise, redeem it; you know not what important events may hang upon it. Keep your word sacred; keep it to the children—they will mark it sooner than anyone else, and the effect will probably be as lasting as life.

THE Countess of Suffolk had married Mr. Howard, and they were both so poor that they took a resolution of going to Hanover before the death of Queen Anne, in order to pay their court to the future Royal Family. Such was their poverty that, having some friends to dinner, and being disappointed of a full remittance, the countess was forced to sell her hair to furnish the entertainment. Long wigs were then in fashion, and the countess's hair being long, fine, and fair, produced her twenty pounds. The countess's hair, however, appears to have been exceeded in value by that of an Oxfordshire lass, of whom we find the following story recorded in the *Protestant Mercury* for July 10, 1700:—"An Oxfordshire lass was lately courted by a young man of that county, who was not willing to marry her unless her friends could advance fifty pounds for her portion, which they being incapable of doing, the lass came to the city to try her fortune, where she met with a good Chapman in the Strand, who made a purchase of her hair, which was delicately long, and gave her sixty pounds, being twenty ounces at three pounds an ounce, with which money she joyfully returned to the country and bought her a husband." Even the hair of this Oxfordshire lass is rivalled by that of an old lady who died in 1720, whose long grey tresses are said in the journals of that period to have been sold to a periwig maker for fifty pounds.

At the gaming-table the Duke of Richmond incurred a debt of honour to Lord Cadogan, which he was unable to pay, and it was agreed that his son, a lad of fifteen, who bore the title of Earl of March, should marry the still younger daughter of Lord Cadogan. The boy was sent for from school, and the girl from the nursery, and the children were told that they were to be married on the spot. The girl had nothing to say; the boy cried out, "They are surely not going to marry me to that dowdy." But married they were. A post-chaise was at the door, the bridegroom was packed off with his tutor to make the grand tour, and the bride sent back to her mother. Lord March remained abroad for several years, after which he returned to London, a well-educated, handsome young man, but in no haste to meet his wife, whom he had never seen except upon the occasion of their hasty marriage. So he tarried in London to amuse himself. One night at the opera his attention was attracted to a beautiful young lady in the boxes. "Who is that?" he asked of a gentleman beside him. "You must be a stranger in London," was the reply, "not to know the toast of the town, the beautiful Lady March." The earl went straight to the box, announced himself, and claimed his bride. The two fell in love with each other on the spot, and lived long and happily together; and when the husband died, she also died of a broken heart within a few months.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. A. M.—1. You should consult some well-known physician on the subject of your ailment. 2. Milk does not agree with every constitution. Bathing and walking are both excellent means of improving your health.

SORCERER.—A carnation pink set in rose geranium leaves will signify "A woman's love and preference." A sprig of arborvitae combined with rose geranium and heliotrope signifies "Unchanging preference, friendship, and devotion."

S. T. P.—There was nothing improper in the older persons leaving the children's party, and going to the entertainment provided for their benefit at the town hall. It would have been better, however, if they had reversed the order of their visit, and attended the party later.

PAULINE.—The gentleman with whom you are on the most intimate terms should be allowed to prolong his visit in preference to the other, who from what we can gather from your epistle, is not so well acquainted. The latter will doubtless recognize the priority of the claim, and not give you any cause for uneasiness.

A. N. S.—1. The colour of the lock of hair sent is dark brown. From the description given of your complexion, eyes, &c., you are, doubtless, what is known as a demi-blond—that is, neither a blonde nor a brunette, but between the two extremes. 2. The fifteenth of November, 1866, came on a Thursday.

S. M.—A secret marriage or an elopement is always a mistake. If you decide upon marrying the young man, announce your decision to your father, and act openly. It is much more creditable, and less troublesome. Endeavour first to win your father's consent, and show your affection and sense of duty by your patience and amiability.

TUNEFUL FRED.—In 1819, Sebastian Erard, a noted piano-maker, introduced an improvement in pianos called "the agraft," in which the bridge formerly used was replaced by a stud or pin for each string, pierced with two or three holes for the wires and made fast below in the wrest-plank.

MAGGIE.—China or porcelain is a semi-vitrified earthenware of an intermediate nature between common ware and glass. The principal basis of any true porcelain or china is that kind of clay which becomes white by baking, and which, by particular additions, undergoes in the fire an incipient vitrification, in which the true nature of the product consists.

F. F. S.—1. July 19, 1865, came on a Wednesday. 2. It is considered unlucky for a gentleman to call on a lady on Saturday night, especially when he is so slightly acquainted as the one you mention. This night of all in the week is, as a general rule, the busiest for the members of the household, and they do not like to be disturbed by visitors.

F. L. P.—It is neither proper nor wise for a young lady to speak to a gentleman to whom she has not been introduced. Cannot you manage to be introduced without appearing to seek it? We do not think that a lady's complexion would have much influence with a gentleman whose friendship is very valuable.

R. S. T.—We cannot judge of the sincerity of your admirers from the very small amount of information given. Young ladies are usually able to determine for themselves this question. If you are in doubt wait until your doubts disappear, or confide your perplexity to your mother. She will prove a safe and wise counsellor.

OMEGA.—Russian salad is made by cutting up apples, onion, artichoke, cabbage, and carrot—in proportions to suit the taste—into small slices or pieces and laying them in a shallow dish with salt, a little vinegar and pepper, and the best of oil. The dressing must thoroughly saturate the mixture for at least twelve hours, and then the effect will be found very agreeable.

S. T. P.—There are several methods of preparing the wine of iron, among which the following may be found useful—Digest one ounce of iron filings, for two or three days, in three fluid ounces of lemon-juice; add half an ounce each of bruised gentian and cinnamon and sixteen ounces of sherry wine. After standing for twenty-four hours, pour off gently and filter.

JESSIE.—The purest and rarest form of carbon—the diamond—burns before the blow-pipe in air or oxygen gas, combining with oxygen to form carbonic acid. Of the various compounds of carbon, the bisulphide and chloride are insoluble in water, but dissolve in ether or alcohol. The oxy-chloride of carbon, or chloro-carbonic acid, is a suffocating gas, which is decomposed by water into carbonic acid and hydrochloric acid.

S. B.—1. Bricks are made from a clay suitable for their manufacture found in abundant quantities all over the world. At the present day brick-making machines have attained a very high degree of perfection, some of them producing from 20,000 to 30,000 bricks per day. 2. Drain tiles are made with the same kind of a machine, possessing a peculiarly contructed die, so as to make the clay into a hollow tube.

ATHLETE.—We do not think constant practice to make one strong as a Hercules desirable. Those who perform great feats of strength are by no means the surest of health and longevity. Moderate exercise daily, in labour, walking, and special exercise is desirable to keep the system in fine tune, but let it be moderate; any straining of the physical powers is as much to be deprecated, as overtaxing the mental and nervous powers. Nature has not provided for such overdrifts on her store.

L. Y. T.—There is no impropriety in a lady and gentleman exchanging photographs, or commencing a correspondence in that way, if they are well satisfied of each other's antecedents; but the lady should wait for the gentleman to take the initiative. If the acquaintance has been of "very short" duration, and the lady knows very little of the gentleman, she had better be chary of her pictures and letters. A lady should not kiss a gentleman who is not her accepted lover.

SARA J.—The following lines may prove an acceptable accompaniment to the gift:—

"As half in shade, and half in sun,
This world along its path advances,
Oh, may that side the sun shines on,
Be all that ever meets thy glances!
May Time, who casts his blight on all,
And dally dooms some joy to death,
On thee let years so gently fall
They shall not crush one flower beneath."

J. MINOR.—Our advice to you is to parent your bashfulness to control you more, rather than less, in your intercourse with ladies. It is a very gross breach of modesty to write to a stranger of the other sex merely through curiosity and a desire to form an acquaintance. Your bashfulness is an indication of good feeling and decent breeding. The young lady probably regards you as a mere boy, and is trifling with you. Drop the acquaintance at once. You need your mother's advice more than others.

MIGNONETTE.

That box of window-mignonette!
The poor, dwarfed plant for sunshine pining,
Best leave it on the ledge where set,
You say—for in my garden, twining,
Are crowns of roses many-hued,
And jasmine garlands for me wreathing,
And e'en the very earth is strewn
With petals, summer breathing.

These sprays—these sprays of mignonette—
How oft, Hugh, in the summer gloaming,
I've plucked them, with the dew all wet,
To deck me for your hoped-for coming!
What tho' they were not very fair—
I overheard, one happy vesper—
Once, when you saw them in my hair—
"My Mignonette!" you whisper.

That box of window-mignonette,
Our eyes first met, dear love, above it.
That moment shall I ever forget?
This poor plant—ever cease to love it?
And then, while shyly back I drew,
And f—f—f my blushes hotly burning,
A tap came to my door, and you—
My heart you were returning

The box of window-mignonette,
You came and leaned just here beside it;
I saw your eyes with pity wet—
You turned away, but could not hide it.
This poor, bare room—the hungry face—
Ah, well, but gladly I remember
That First Day of My Year of Grace—
That seventh of November.

And so, this box of mignonette,
To our new home, its window sunny
Shall have, where dews shall softly wet,
And bees hang over it for honey!
And, Hugh, when to the altar-rail
You lead your little bride this hour,
I'll crown me with this blossom pale,
And not the orange-flower.

C. V. M.

LISA.—1. The little white spots observable in the finger-nails are due to some subtle action of the blood. They sometimes disappear of themselves but there is no known method of removing them. In reality they signify nothing, though generally supposed to denote gifts. 2. A mixture, consisting of fine honey, 4 ounces, and the best glycerine, 1 ounce, united by heat, to which is added, when cold, 1 fluid ounce of rectified spirit, and 6 drops of ambergris essence, is highly recommended for whitening the face and hands. Keep it well bottled, and apply the parts when retiring for the night.

BESSIE B.—1. Anyone can learn to write neatly and legibly by careful and persevering practice, in copying good handwriting. 2. If your father does not wish you to know the young man, you would be wrong and foolish in seeking an introduction. Your father probably knows better than you whom it is good for you to have as friends, and he has sources of information about the characters of young men which are not open to you. Under ordinary circumstances you might mention to the hostess at any social gathering, at which the young man and yourself were present, that you would like to meet him.

STUDENT.—In one sense, your criticism is just. If a woman was a widow at the time of her death, her husband, of course, must have died before she did. But the words "the late," in such a case as the one you mention, signify something more than the mere fact that the widow's husband was dead. They also signify that he had died within a comparatively recent period. In the case of a woman who had lost her husband when she was twenty-five or thirty years old, and had lived a widow for forty or fifty years, no one would speak of her as the widow of "the late" John Jones. But if her husband had preceded her to the grave within a brief period, the words "the late" would be used to indicate that fact.

BOUVIER.—1. The gentleman accompanying the lady to the party must not monopolise her attention entirely, as there may be several others who wish to dance with her. As a general rule, the lady is engaged beforehand, and in no case would it be proper for her to take a gentleman to dance with her. It is optional with the lady who her partners shall be during the evening. 2. Allow the lady to set the hour when it will be most convenient to leave the ball room, and do not on any account ask her to leave prior to that time. 3. Your penmanship is excellent. 4. We know of no special advantage being turned down.

A. L. D.—Make up your mind to be true to the man to whom you are now engaged, and refuse to see or think of your former lover, and you will probably be more contented and happy, in time, than if you give way to your fickle whims. If, however, you never have cared, in the least, for your present sweetheart, and I think that your old lover can love and trust you despite the past, and that you can be happier with him, tell your fiance exactly how matters stand, and ask his release from your present promise. You need not fear threats. They are very rarely put into practice.

MISER R.—If the daughter is really "beyond your control," we don't see that you can take any steps in the matter. As she is of age, her right to act for herself you cannot deny, and as you differ radically on the question of visitors and visiting, is it not better to acquiesce by not further opposing her? A better feeling—one that might change things wholly—might be established, first, by such acquiescence, and next, by kindly advances on your part to regain her interest, and then to become her entertainer yourself to such a degree that she would care less and less for other company. This seems to us the most sensible course, if you can pursue it.

L. P. T.—"Cut off with a shilling," is an old English proverb, and it refers to a practice formerly very common in this country, to leave a shilling to an unpopular child of the family. This was sometimes varied with the addition "to buy him a halter," implying that the legatee ought to be hung, and that the shilling was left to him for that purpose. The custom doubtless had its origin partly in a desire to leave a slogging reflection upon the rejected heir, and partly from a popular superstition that without such reference the heir could claim his natural share in the distribution of the estate. There never was, in fact, such a law in England, and the notion probably came from the old Roman practice, to which English law is so largely indebted, of setting aside a testament as being *iniquis* (deficient in natural duty) if it totally passed by without mention any child of the testator.

DORINE W.—1. The inventors of galvanic belts claim that they produce the most salutary effects, and there are numerus as persons who have worn them that are willing to testify to their efficacy. 2. Light from battery electricity was first discovered by Sir Humphry Davy, at the Royal Institution, London, in 1810. Faraday, in 1831, by his great discovery of induced currents, rendered practicable the application of electricity to the production of a good artificial light. It was not, however, until 1853 that the magneto-electric machine was actually applied to the purpose, and, in 1857, the first great practical trial took place, when Faraday had the satisfaction of seeing his conception carried into effect. The electric light was introduced into a light-house at South Foreland, a headland on the south-east coast of England, December 8, 1858, and later it was adopted at Dungeness Lighthouse, on the English Channel.

ESTHER T.—We think that the young man has no real affection for you, although he is probably flattered by your evident admiration for him. The fact that he does not come to see you, or take notice of you in company, while he endeavours when you are alone to make you think that you are of importance to him, shows this. His conduct, in acting thus, is not at all open or gentlemanly, although too many young men would do exactly the same under similar circumstances. Your proper course is to fill your life with other things. Make those who live in the house with you happier and less hard-worked than they are now; go among your friends, cultivate the acquaintance of other girls, especially of those who are not very "jolly" or "naturally full of fun," and try to make their lives "jollier" and brighter; read good books; take up some study or pursuit for which you have a natural taste, such as modern languages, music, or drawing. In this way you will learn to get along without the fascinating young man; and if he persists in neglecting you in public, you will be able to punish him by snubbing him, as he deserves, in private.

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